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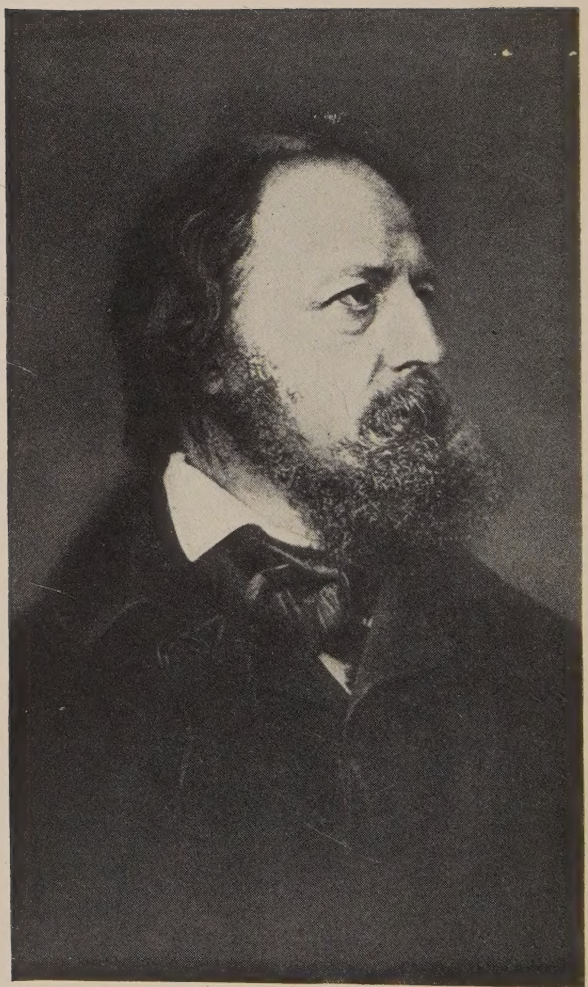

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ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

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ALFRED TENNYSON

HOW TO KNOW HIM

By

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AN INTRODUCTION TO POETRY, ETC., ETC.

With Portrait

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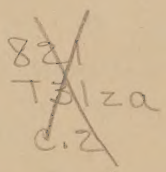

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To

I. M. A.

"Happy he
With such a mother! faith in womankind
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
Comes easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall
He shall not blind his soul with clay."

of his work is much more abundant and significant than is often supposed by those who know him only as a lyrist. And for another, it happens that at the present time we are rather further removed from the standpoint of Tennyson and his age than from some remoter periods. Hence I have added a short chapter on the relations of our age to the Victorians, as illustrated by the poetry of Tennyson,—a chapter which can very easily be omitted by any who are not interested in the question why his work is valued so differently to-day from what it was a generation ago.

Into a book like this there go materials drawn from many sources which can not be fully acknowledged. In particular, every student of Tennyson is under endless obligation to the monumental Memoir written by his son, which I have followed in all matters biographical. I wish also to acknowledge my indebtedness to the late Stopford Brooke's work on *Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life,* to Professor A. C. Bradley's commentary on *In Memoriam,* and to the volume of selected Poems of Tennyson made for the Athenæum Press Series by Dr. Henry van Dyke and Mr. D. L. Chambers.

R. M. A.

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TENNYSON

TENNYSON

I

LIFE, CHARACTER, AND TRAINING

"The poet in a golden clime was born,
With golden stars above;
Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love."

So wrote the young Tennyson, and so we may suppose he always believed. There was, to be sure, nothing strikingly suggestive of a golden clime, to the common eye, in the misty wolds and fens of Lincolnshire, where stood the Somersby rectory, in which he was born on the sixth of August, 1809. But at least it did nothing to dim the glories of the inner world, and both the boy Tennyson and the man kept the high poetic nature which he sought to describe. Indeed, the life which he lived might be called the most typical and the most happy poet's life of any of the great English men of letters. Free from controversy such as embittered the spirits of Milton and Pope and Byron, from personal faults or foibles such as shadowed the names of Burns and Shelley, and from such mingling with worldly

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affairs as brought home so keenly to Scott the difference between wealth and poverty,—wounded by none of these things, touched only by such sorrows as must come to every man, beloved of his people and recognized as their real representative in the field of his art, kept for a long and vigorous life and an old age that sloped gradually to the calm of sunset and evening star—it was such a career as one would plan for a great poet, could the powers of Providence be delivered into one's hands.

The atmosphere of the rectory was full of the two great sources of poetic material—nature and books. Says the poet's son, writing of his father's childhood: "The charm and beauty of the brook at Somersby haunted him. He delighted to recall the rare richness of the bowery lanes, the wooded hollow of Holy Well, the cold springs flowing from the sandstone rocks. He loved this land of quiet villages, 'ridged wolds,' large fields, gray hillsides, 'tufted knolls,' noble ash-trees." Not far distant, too, was the sea, and "he had a passion for the 'waste enormous marsh,' the 'heaped hills that bound the sea,' and the thunderous breakers." And within the home was Dr. Tennyson's library, and the rector himself, a really learned man, who himself wrote poetry, and also dipped into painting and music in the leisurely manner of the country clergy of those unhurried days. There were twelve children, of such sound stock that ten of them lived to be seventy years old and more; and in youth they read and recited and wrote poetry together,—a ver-

itable "nest of nightingales," Leigh Hunt called them,—for in those days it was still common for youth to be poetic and unashamed. Why is it that with us, if a boy is stirred to put into verse the natural hopes and loves of boyhood, he is likely to conceal the fact as he would an indecency, and his father, if he learns of it, may even do the same? Poetry, so far from being at the opposite end of things from athletic play, is normally much like athletics in being the spontaneous expression of youth; and whether the verses be good or bad makes (for the time being) little difference. So, at any rate, thought the good Dr. Tennyson and all his household. Some of them wrote better verses, some worse ones; and out of the company of children three real poets were to emerge—Frederick and Charles and Alfred.

"According to the best of my recollection," wrote Alfred, "when I was about eight years old I covered two sides of a slate with Thomsonian blank verse in praise of flowers for my brother Charles, who was a year older than I was, Thomson being then the only poet I knew. . . . About ten or eleven Pope's Homer's *Iliad* became a favourite of mine, and I wrote hundreds and hundreds of lines in the regular Popeian metre. . . . At about twelve and onwards I wrote an epic of about 6,000 lines *à la* Walter Scott—full of battles, dealing too with sea and mountain scenery—with Scott's regularity of octosyllables and his occasional varieties. Though the performance was very likely worth nothing, I

never felt myself more truly inspired." This sort of thing went on until it came to pass that when Charles was eighteen and Alfred seventeen, they brought out a little book of *Poems by Two Brothers,* for which an oddly hopeful or far-sighted publisher was willing to pay them a hundred pounds. On the day it came out, as the older brother related, the authors hired a carriage, in which they drove to Mablethorpe, on the neighboring seashore, and "shared their triumph with the winds and waves."

Two years later the two brothers entered Trinity College, Cambridge. It was a time when the intellectual life of the university, so far as it depended on the officers of instruction, was at a low ebb—or so at least Tennyson found it. They taught him "nothing," he wrote, "feeding not the heart." On the other hand the friendships of the undergraduate life were of the most stimulating and valuable character. This has long been, and remains, the chief glory of the universities of England,—that they have nurtured a real intellectual comradeship among such of their students as cared to think; something altogether different, and probably a good deal more valuable, than the diligent pursuit of "courses" and "credits" by the typical serious-minded American collegian. Among Tennyson's contemporaries who afterward became famous were James Spedding, Merivale the historian, Richard Trench, and Monckton Milnes, besides one—perhaps the most gifted and beloved of them all—who was destined to die unfamed but to reap immortality through his poet-

friend; this was Arthur Hallam, son of a distinguished historian. With all of these young men Tennyson was intimate, and with them he took part in a little society called "The Apostles," where the deepest questions in politics, religion, and philosophy were discussed with the light-hearted curiosity of youth. It was Tennyson, said one of the company long afterward, who was the hero of them all. The bigness of his physique—for he was a fine, strapping figure—conjoined with the delicacy of his taste, the richness of his imagination, combined with an eager interest in whatever was doing in the active world —these things impressed his comrades in college days, and they never ceased to impress all who knew him.

While an undergraduate Tennyson won the Chancellor's Prize for an original poem—the first time, it is worth recalling, that the award had been made to a poem written in blank verse; and while still at Cambridge he also published a little volume, the *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical,* of 1830. If one turns to the contents of this book, as it is partly represented by the first group of poems in the later *Collected Works,* it is pleasant to see what there is which one might guess to be the forerunner, at the age of twenty-one, of the Tennyson we know. There is the little Owl song, which one would almost say had been excerpted from a play of Shakespeare's:

> When cats run home and light is come,
> And dew is cold upon the ground,
> And the far-off stream is dumb,

And the whirring sail goes round,
And the whirring sail goes round,
Alone and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the belfry sits.

Again, there is a more serious and moving portrayal of nature in this wonderful little song depicting the melancholy of autumn:

A spirit haunts the year's last hours
Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers:
To himself he talks;
For at eventide, listening earnestly,
At his work you may hear him sob and sigh
In the walks;
Earthward he boweth the heavy stalks
Of the mouldering flowers:
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,
As a sick man's room when he taketh repose
An hour before death;
My very heart faints and my whole soul grieves
At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves,
And the breath
Of the fading edges of box beneath,
And the year's last rose.
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

In another poem, the "Ode to Memory," we find

described the scenery of Tennyson's native county, somewhat in the early manner of Milton:

> The woods that belt the gray hillside,
> The seven elms, the poplars four
> That stand beside my father's door,
> . . . the brook that loves
> To purl o'er matted cress and ribbèd sand,
> Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,
> Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,
> In every elbow and turn,
> The filter'd tribute of the rough woodland . . .
> The livelong bleat
> Of the thick-fleecèd sheep from wattled folds,
> Upon the ridgèd wolds,
> When the first matin-song hath waken'd loud
> Over the dark dewy earth forlorn.

Others of these early poems are mere exercises, one might say, in poetic fancy and melodious phrasing; such, for example, as those dealing with maidens whose names, like those of Rossetti's angels, are "sweet symphonies,"—Claribel, Airy fairy Lilian, Isabel, Oriana, "faintly smiling Adeline." All these ladies, said the poet in looking back upon them, were evolved, like the German professor's camel, from his "inner consciousness." But among such relatively trifling prentice work, and such charming but merely sensuous studies of beautiful objects and sounds, there are also found signs of the deeper themes, the serious responsibilities of his art, which were to make of Tennyson not merely an artist but a student and teacher in the field of contemporary thought. In this group is the char-

acter-study called "Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive Mind," memorable as Tennyson's first experiment in the dramatic monologue. Or, again, the fragment on "Love and Death," in which first appears the problem, "If a man die, shall he live again?" which was to haunt the poet throughout his career. Says Love:

> Thou art the shadow of life, and as the tree
> Stands in the sun and shadows all beneath,
> So in the light of great eternity
> Life eminent creates the shade of death;
> The shadow passeth when the tree shall fall,
> But I shall reign for ever over all.

But most significant of all are the verses on "The Poet," from which were quoted the lines standing at the head of this chapter. Here Tennyson set forth not only the poet's character, but the nature of his work in the world.

> He saw thro' life and death, thro' good and ill,
> He saw thro' his own soul.
> The marvel of the everlasting will,
> An open scroll,
>
> Before him lay: with echoing feet he threaded
> The secretest walks of fame:
> The viewless arrows of his thoughts were headed
> And wing'd with flame,
>
> Like Indian reeds blown from his silver tongue,
> And of so fierce a flight,
> From Calpe unto Caucasus they sung,
> Filling with light

And vagrant melodies the winds which bore
Them earthward till they lit;
Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field flower,
The fruitful wit

Cleaving, took root, and springing forth anew
Where'er they fell, behold,
Like to the mother plant in semblance, grew
A flower all gold,

And bravely furnish'd all abroad to fling
The wingèd shafts of truth,
To throng with stately blooms the breathing spring
Of Hope and Youth.

The poet, then, is to enrich the hope and youth of the world,—to be not merely a source of immediate pleasure and enlightenment, but a seminal principle from which truths germinate and propagate themselves as truth always does.

Thus truth was multiplied on truth, the world
Like one great garden show'd.

But not only so: in the new age which the poet's thoughts have enlightened and fructified, the august figure of Freedom is seen to rise and become dominant, and in her rule wisdom now supplants the old tyranny of force.

No sword
Of wrath her right harm whirl'd,
But one poor poet's scroll, and with his word
She shook the world.

Tennyson lived to write many more beautiful

poems than this, but none more significant. Think of it: a young man of only twenty-one, smitten with the beauty of earth and the joys of the senses, with the witchery of words and the magic of rhythm; yet, while eager to perfect himself in the expression of all these things, looking upon the art of poetry as first of all a means for the propagation of truth, and for aiding the alliance of wisdom and human freedom. How utterly different from the old view of poetry as a sort of decorative art, beautifying the mind with the fancies of fiction, which must nevertheless be corrected, as occasion required, by the more sober and serious faculties! Wordsworth and Coleridge and Shelley had greatly protested against this lower conception of the art, and Tennyson had already learned from them as well as from his own thinking.

In the year following the appearance of this little volume of 1830, Tennyson left the university without being graduated, because it seemed to be his part to be companion to his father at home; though as it turned out, the old rector lived only a month after Alfred's return, and it was the mother to whom his care was to be devoted. From this moment until the end of his life he dwelt—in one sense or another—at home, a private man, whose story gives us neither the outward adventures of those called "men of action," nor even, to any great degree, those inward tumults and vicissitudes which poets' lives very often provide in the interest of their biographers. In the subsequent life of Tennyson

there is little to explain, as there is little to apologize for. His only fault, one might say, was a rather exaggerated desire to be let alone; or, to put it negatively, an unwillingness to mingle, except through his writings, with the stream of contemporary life. Not even the hope of honorable fame was so strong with him as the wish to dwell, both in body and spirit, in what he so lovingly pictured—

> an English home—gray twilight pour'd
> On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
> Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
> A haunt of ancient peace.

The next volume of poems appeared late in 1832 (being actually dated 1833). To one with a discerning eye it marked a notable advance on the earlier work, and a certain number of the poems which first appeared in it are still among the favorites. The sensuous beauty of the more youthful work is still to be seen, but with better workmanship and increased spiritual significance: as, for instance, in the description of the land of the Lotos-Eaters,

> In which it seemèd always afternoon.

This was such work as Keats might have done; and such also was the richly wrought fabric of "The Lady of Shalott." But in this latter poem a new element appears, the importance of which no one could guess at the time,—Tennyson's interest in the old Arthurian story, both on the side of romantic beauty and on that of symbolical significance. The

study of character, again, which in the earlier volume had been hinted at but slightly, now appears as an important element in the poet's purpose, with some notable dramatic monologues to represent it: "The Miller's Daughter," "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," and "The May Queen." But the most important, perhaps, of the new poems is a new and intensely vital account of the poet's conception of his own calling—and of all similar callings—in "The Palace of Art." This, for the volume of 1833, is his creed, as the verses on "The Poet" were for that of 1830. And it is preceded by some dedicatory verses which make his purpose clear. (It was characteristic of Tennyson, and is more or less distressing to those who prefer subtler methods, that he should honestly seek to make his meanings clear.)

> I send you here a sort of allegory
> (For you will understand it) of a soul,
> A sinful soul possess'd of many gifts,
> A spacious garden full of flowering weeds,
> A glorious Devil, large in heart and brain,
> That did love Beauty only (Beauty seen
> In all varieties of mould and mind),
> And Knowledge for its beauty; or if Good,
> Good only for its beauty, seeing not
> That Beauty, Good, and Knowledge are three sisters
> That dote upon each other, friends to man,
> Living together under the same roof,
> And never can be sunder'd without tears.
> And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall be
> Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie,
> Howling in outer darkness.

To set forth this thesis Tennyson pictured the Palace of Art, and its magnificent assemblage of the works of architecture and painting, amid which the Soul might sit,

> Singing and murmuring in her feastful mirth,
> Joying to feel herself alive,
> Lord over Nature, Lord of the visible earth,
> Lord of the senses five;

rejoicing, too, in her isolation from the low, swine-like herd of humanity, and in her immunity from the struggles which come through effort to solve "the riddle of the painful earth."

> "I take possession of man's mind and deed.
> I care not what the sects may brawl.
> I sit as God holding no form of creed,
> But contemplating all."

This is the central thought of the poem; for this is the heart of the heresy which the poet was depicting—the self-sufficiency of art, or, as it used commonly to be called, the theory of "art for art's sake." If one looks at the narrative as such, it must be admitted that it suffers from a serious defect: just as in Shelley's *Prometheus* we never learn what it really was that accomplished the one great action of the poem, the defeat of the tyrant Jove, so here we are left in obscurity as to just what event awakened the Soul from her ignoble satisfaction, and made her feel the terrible isolation in which she had lived—isolation like

> A still salt pool lock'd in with bars of sand,
> Left on the shore,

or one

> Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round
> With blackness as a solid wall.

At any rate, the revelation came, driving her from the Palace to a "cottage in the vale," yet with the hope that after having purged her guilt she might return to her joys *with others*. As his later note to the poem, Tennyson recorded the simple memory of a word spoken to him in college days by his friend Richard Trench: "Tennyson, we cannot live in Art."

Poems like these we have glanced at, with others now somewhat less well known, won Tennyson friends at once, as they were sure to do; yet on the other hand they did not make his reputation entirely secure, nor stifle the hostile criticism of the men of the older school. It was an age of much bitterness in reviewing,—of misdirected cleverness spent without a decent modicum of kindness, or of effort to discern what a young writer might really be trying to do; and Tennyson was to suffer from this, as even greater poets had done before. His love of beauty of detail, which allied him with Keats, led Bulwer, who reviewed the poems in the *New Monthly Magazine,* to call such a poem as "Œnone" a "Cockney classic," alluding to the caption of Cockney which had been bestowed on Keats and his friends in some famous reviews in *Black-*

wood's Magazine. His love of new and free metrical movements led Coleridge—now in his dotage, and wholly negligible as a critic—to say sadly that the young poet had "begun to write verses without very well understanding what metre is," and to advise him to confine himself to heroic couplets for a considerable time. His occasional disposition to seek for utter simplicity of phrasing won him the honor of being grouped with Lamb, in the *Literary Gazette,* as a poet of the "Baa-Lamb School," while on the other hand his frequent use of new and rich combinations of poetic diction was called affected by many other critics. And to complete the circle, his interest, already apparent, in philosophic speculation brought upon him the charge of obscurity: the reviewer in *The Athenæum* could make neither head nor tail of the deeper poems like "The Palace of Art." Such are the rocks between which one who has to win the favor of critics must steer his course!

In particular Tennyson had aroused the enmity of the group of young Scottish journalists connected with the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's,* chief of whom were John Wilson, who wrote under the pseudonym "Christopher North," and John Lockhart, the son-in-law of Scott. An arrogant review of the Poems of 1830, written by Wilson, had tempted him to include in the volume of 1833—unwisely enough—this little squib addressed to Christopher North:

You did late review my lays,
Crusty Christopher;
You did mingle blame and praise,
Rusty Christopher.
When I learnt from whom it came,
I forgave you all the blame,
Musty Christopher;
I could not forgive the praise,
Fusty Christopher.

I do not at all agree with the late Professor Lounsbury, who calls these lines "hardly worthy of an angry schoolboy"; they might well, I think, be enjoyed with moderate admiration, as such things go, if viewed as a personal retort for the benefit of the friends of the two men concerned. But no doubt they are beneath the dignity of a volume of serious poems, and Lounsbury is quite right in observing that they "brought with them their own punishment." Lockhart now took up the cudgels, and in his review of the new poems in the *Quarterly* did his best to maintain the reputation of that journal for criticism distinguished by savagery rather than taste. Here Tennyson was called "a new prodigy of genius—another and brighter star of that galaxy or *milky way* of poetry of which the lamented Keats was the harbinger." Lockhart's manner of handling the more delicate tracings of the young poet's imagination may be judged from one or two passages. On the lines

And when the sappy field and wood
Grow green beneath the showery gray,
And rugged barks begin to bud,

> And thro' damp holts, newflushed with May,
> Ring sudden laughters of the jay,—

he comments: "Laughter, the philosophers tell us, is a peculiar attribute of man; but as Shakespeare found 'tongues in trees and sermons in stones,' this true poet endows all nature not merely with human sensibilities but with human functions—the jay laughs, and we find, indeed, a little further on, that the woodpecker laughs also; but to mark the distinction between their merriment and that of men, both jays and woodpeckers laugh upon melancholy occasions. We are glad, moreover, to observe that Mr. Tennyson is prepared for, and therefore will not be disturbed by, human laughter, if any silly reader should catch the infection from the woodpeckers and jays." Then, of the lines from the same poem,

> Come only when my days are still,
> And at my head-stone whisper low,
> And tell me—

"Now, what would an ordinary bard wish to be told under such circumstances?—why, perhaps, how his sweetheart was, or his child, or his family, or how the Reform Bill worked, or whether the last edition of his poems had been sold—*papae!* our genuine poet's first wish is

> 'And tell me—*if the woodbines blow!*'

When, indeed, he shall have been thus satisfied as

to the woodbines (of the blowing of which in their due season he may, we think, feel pretty secure), he turns a passing thought to his friend, and another to his mother."

This, obviously, is the sort of thing that could be done with any poetry by one maliciously inclined, though it should also be said that some of the other passages singled out by Lockhart were not ill chosen to represent the exuberance of a youthful imagination which the poet had not yet learned the art to restrain or correct. Some men—Browning, for example—would have been quite undisturbed; could have laughed such a review off, and gone on writing what they chose. But Tennyson was not of this sort; unfriendly criticism stung him—even friendly criticism he found it hard to take as a wise man should. For a time, then, he shrank into silence. When he learned that John Stuart Mill was to write a review of his poems,—one which turned out to be far the best that the volume of 1833 received, as Professor Lounsbury has shown,—he wrote to his friend Spedding, asking him to dissuade Mill from the plan. "I do not wish to be dragged forward again in any shape before the reading public at present, particularly on the score of my old poems, most of which I have so corrected (particularly 'Œnone') as to make them much less imperfect." Partly, then, from this sensitiveness, and partly—as the letter also shows—from a sound sense that he must do much thinking and correcting in order to feel ready to speak to the public

again as a poet, there followed the volume of 1833 a long period of silence. During these years Tennyson was acting as the head of his family, caring for his mother, arranging for the education of his younger brothers, seeking to make the meager income of the household do its best for them all, and always reading, always meditating, and continuing to exchange fruitful intercourse, by letter or personal talk, with his faithful group of high-minded friends. The Tennysons had to leave the old home at Somersby in 1837, and during the following years made many changes of residence in the search for a quiet and comfortable abode; they were successively at High Beech, at Tunbridge Wells, at Boxley, and at Cheltenham.

Meantime, at the very beginning of this epoch of silence—that is, in September, 1833—there had come the great sorrow which dominated Tennyson's whole middle period and whose shadow was never wholly withdrawn from his life. This was the death of Arthur Hallam, his more than brother and the betrothed of his sister. It is to this event, indeed, that we may attribute in some degree the unproductiveness of the following years; for at the time it seems to have paralyzed the poet's creative powers, though destined, as the whole world knows, in time to nurture them as a noble sorrow should nurture a noble nature.

This was also the period of Tennyson's only love, which, though not threatened by tragic calamity, was shadowed by uncertainty of outcome. Back

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in 1830 there was a spring day when the Sellwoods, country neighbors of the Tennysons, drove to Somersby for a call; and Emily Sellwood, one of the daughters, was taken out for a stroll by Arthur Hallam. "At a turn of the path," says the son of Alfred Tennyson, "they met my father, who, at sight of the slender, beautiful girl of seventeen in her simple gray dress, moving 'like a light across these woodland ways,' suddenly said to her, 'Are you a Dryad or an Oread wandering here?'" From time to time they met thereafter, notably at the marriage of Charles Tennyson and Emily's younger sister Louisa, in 1836, and during the following years corresponded under the terms of an informal engagement. But it was contrary to all the traditions of the English society in which they moved that they should actually undertake to marry without more visible means of support than were thus far apparent; and as time went on, and the pecuniary prospects of the Tennysons, and of Alfred in particular, did not grow better, Miss Sellwood's family insisted that their correspondence should cease. This was in 1840. Their letters were destroyed, after Tennyson's death, owing to his sensitive dislike of the fashion of laying bare the sacred privacies of life, so that we can not form the same judgment as in the case of some other poets, respecting the part played by the woman he loved in the development of his intellectual and imaginative life. One can not doubt, however, that it was considerable. From what he wrote to Emily his son has saved

some fragments, largely impersonal, hinting at the deep themes on which they thought together. "Through darkness and storm and weariness of mind and of body is there built a passage for His created ones to the gates of light." This is one saying. And again: "There is the glory of being loved, for so have we 'laid great bases for eternity.'"

Meantime, for one reason or another, his creative powers had been renewed, and in 1842, nearly a decade after the preceding volume, a new book of poems was ready. It included a good part of those of 1833, carefully revised, and from the text of these as well as from those now published for the first time it was instantly evident that the years of silence had not been passed in vain. The characteristic new title for this volume was *English Idyls*, and it suggests the developing realism of the poet —his greater interest in fidelity to fact, as distinguished from lyrical beauty loved for itself—which a number of the poems represent. In one of the most charming of the Idyls, "The Gardener's Daughter," one might say that the earlier and the later elements are combined: there is the luscious detail of Tennyson's boyish art, yet restrained and held to a sense of real English scenery and English girlhood:

> We reach'd a meadow slanting to the North,
> Down which a well-worn pathway courted us
> To one green wicket in a privet hedge;
> This, yielding, gave into a grassy walk

Thro' crowded lilac-ambush trimly pruned;
And one warm gust, full-fed with perfume, blew
Beyond us, as we enter'd in the cool.
The garden stretches southward. In the midst
A cedar spread his dark-green layers of shade. . . .

For up the porch there grew an Eastern rose,
That, flowering high, the last night's gale had caught,
And blown across the walk. One arm aloft—
Gown'd in pure white, that fitted to the shape—
Holding the bush, to fix it back, she stood,
A single stream of all her soft brown hair
Pour'd on one side; the shadow of the flowers
Stole all the golden gloss, and, wavering
Lovingly lower, trembled on her waist—
Ah, happy shade!—and still went wavering down,
But, ere it touch'd a foot that might have danced
The greensward into greener circles, dipp'd,
And mix'd with shadows of the common ground.

We note also the maturing penetration and reverence of the man Tennyson, in such lines as those that complete—or refuse to complete—the story of the speaker's love:

Would you learn at full
How passion rose thro' circumstantial grades
Beyond all grades develop'd? and indeed
I had not staid so long to tell you all,
But while I mused came Memory with sad eyes,
Holding the folded annals of my youth;
And while I mused, Love with knit brows went by,
And with a flying finger swept my lips,
And spake, "Be wise: not easily forgiven
Are those who, setting wide the doors that bar
The secret bridal chambers of the heart,
Let in the day." Here, then, my words have end.

Besides the idyls, and other poems akin to them in simplicity but more touched with humor, like "Will Waterproof," this volume contained the wonderful "Morte d'Arthur," Tennyson's first direct paraphrase of Malory's romance of the same name; the "Vision of Sin," a poem which recalled "The Palace of Art" in its combination of sensuous beauty and moral earnestness; and two or three new dramatic monologues. Of these last the most perfect is the "Ulysses," beyond the art of which, indeed, Tennyson never passed, and the most dramatic and meditative is the "Locksley Hall." To these we have to return another time. Perhaps it will suffice now to re-read Carlyle's greeting to the volume of 1842—a greeting from one who was not given to "gush," and who had not found much in recent English poetry to stir him deeply.

"Truly it is long," he wrote, "since in any English Book, Poetry or Prose, I have felt the pulse of a real man's heart as I do in this same. A right valiant, true fighting, victorious heart; strong as a lion's, yet gentle, loving and full of music; what I call a genuine singer's heart! There are tones as of the nightingale; low murmurs as of wood-doves at summer noon; everywhere a noble sound as of the free winds and leafy woods. . . . Your 'Dora' reminds me of the Book of *Ruth;* in 'The Two Voices,' which I am told some Reviewer calls 'trivial morality,' I think of passages in *Job.* . . . And so I say let us all rejoice somewhat. And so let us all smite rhythmically, all in concert, 'the sounding furrows,' and sail forward with new cheer, 'beyond the sunset,' whither we are bound—

> It may be that the gulfs will wash us down,
> It may be we shall touch the happy Isles
> And see the great Achilles whom we knew!*

These lines do not make me weep, but there is in me what would fill whole lachrymatories as I read."

From this time there was no question regarding Tennyson's place as poet. From this time, too, there was a continuous sale of his works which assured him a modest income. But it was not enough to solve the problem of a livelihood,—rarely, indeed, will poetry take care of that!—and things were the worse in 1844, when a considerable part of his patrimony went by the board in the wreck of a manufacturing company in which it had been rather fantastically invested. As a partial compensation there came in 1845 a pension of two hundred pounds from the government, in accordance with the old English custom of putting on the "civil list" the names of those who, in the words of Sir Robert Peel's letter to Tennyson, have "devoted to worthy purposes great intellectual powers." In fact, the pension was the result of some little friendly nudging of the government by Tennyson's friends—as is remembered chiefly through Lord Houghton's story of the intervention of Carlyle.

"'Richard Milnes,' said Carlyle one day, withdrawing his pipe from his mouth, as they were seated together in the little house in Cheyne Row,

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* The quotations are from the poem "Ulysses."

'when are you going to get that pension for Alfred Tennyson?'

" 'My dear Carlyle," responded Milnes, 'the thing is not so easy as you seem to suppose. What will my constituents say if I do get the pension for Tennyson? They know nothing about him or his poetry, and they will probably think he is some poor relation of my own, and the whole affair is a job.'

"Solemn and emphatic was Carlyle's response. 'Richard Milnes, on the Day of Judgment, when the Lord asks you why you didn't get that pension for Alfred Tennyson, it will not do to lay the blame on your constituents; it is *you* that will be damned.' "

On the other hand, the pension was attacked by some who thought Tennyson undeserving of recognition as compared with poets of the older school. Chief of these was Bulwer-Lytton, who had lately tried without success to secure a pension for a worthy though now almost forgotten dramatist, James Sheridan Knowles. He vented his wrath in a satire called "The New Timon," in which he called Tennyson "School-Miss Alfred," and in a prose note observed: "The most that can be said of Mr. Tennyson is, that he is the favourite of a small circle; to the mass of the public little more than his name is known—he has moved no thousands—he has created no world of characters—he has labored out no deathless truths, nor enlarged our knowledge of the human heart by the delineation of various and elevating passions." All of which enables us to see that the poet had not yet fully won the place he was presently to occupy in the mind of England.

We can not here follow the further details of Tennyson's career, except as there are outstanding matters significant of his development. But on the year 1850 we must pause as the great central year of his life. In it he published *In Memoriam*,—the work which endeared him to his own generation more than any other,—was married, and succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate. The marriage was made possible by the promise, at last, of a sufficient income; after fourteen years of waiting, Tennyson's happiness was assured. "The peace of God," he said long afterward, "came into my life when I wedded her." The marriage was at Shiplake, where the vicar, Doctor Rawnsley, was the husband of the bride's cousin; and to him on the following day Tennyson sent these verses:

Vicar of this pleasant spot
  Where it was my chance to marry,
Happy, happy be your lot
  In the Vicarage by the quarry.
You were he that knit the knot!
Sweetly, smoothly flow your life.
  Never tithe unpaid perplex you,
Parish feud, or party strife,
  All things please you, nothing vex you,
You have given me such a wife!

The pair took a house at Twickenham, where Pope had made his home more than a century earlier, and began the quiet family life which was to continue for over forty years. In the following April this life was consecrated by its first sorrow, the loss,

at birth, of their first child, owing to an accident to Mrs. Tennyson. The poet's words about this first-born son, in two letters written at some interval of time, are among the finest pieces of his epistolary prose.

"He lay like a little warrior, having fought the fight, and failed, with his hands clenched, and a frown on his brow." . . . "It was Easter Sunday, and at his birth I heard the great roll of the organ, of the uplifted psalm. . . . Dead as he was I felt proud of him. Dear little nameless one that hast lived tho' thou hast never breathed, I, thy father, love thee and weep over thee, tho' thou hast no place in the Universe. Who knows? It may be that thou hast."

That summer (1851) Mr. and Mrs. Tennyson went for a journey to Italy. It might almost have been called their wedding journey, since it was the first considerable one they had taken together; and we are fortunate in having a poetical record of it, made some time afterward, when, on a visit to Edinburgh, Tennyson discovered a daisy that had been kept in a book as a remembrance of the trip.

THE DAISY

O love, what hours were thine and mine,
In lands of palm and southern pine;
  In lands of palm, of orange-blossom,
Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.

What Roman strength Turbìa show'd
In ruin, by the mountain road;
  How like a gem, beneath, the city
Of little Monaco, basking, glow'd.

How richly down the rocky dell
The torrent vineyard streaming fell
  To meet the sun and sunny waters,
That only heaved with a summer swell.

What slender campanili grew
By bays, the peacock's neck in hue;
  Where, here and there, on sandy beaches
A milky-bell'd amaryllis blew.

How young Columbus seem'd to rove,
Yet present in his natal grove,
  Now watching high on mountain cornice,
And steering, now, from a purple cove,

Now pacing mute by ocean's rim;
Till, in a narrow street and dim,
  I stay'd the wheels at Cogoletto,
And drank, and loyally drank to him.

Nor knew we well what pleased us most,
Not the clipp'd palm of which they boast;
  But distant colour, happy hamlet,
A moulder'd citadel on the coast,

Or tower, or high hill-convent, seen
A light amid its olives green;
  Or olive-hoary cape in ocean;
Or rosy blossom in hot ravine,

Where oleanders flush'd the bed
Of silent torrents, gravel-spread;
  And, crossing, oft we saw the glisten
Of ice, far up on a mountain head.

We loved that hall, tho' white and cold,
Those nichèd shapes of noble mould,
  A princely people's awful princes,
The grave, severe Genovese of old.

At Florence too what golden hours,
In those long galleries, were ours;
  What drives about the fresh Cascinè,
Or walks in Boboli's ducal bowers.

In bright vignettes, and each complete,
Of tower or duomo, sunny-sweet,
  Or palace, how the city glitter'd,
Thro' cypress avenues, at our feet.

But when we cross'd the Lombard plain
Remember what a plague of rain;
  Of rain at Reggio, rain at Parma;
At Lodi, rain, Piacenza, rain.

And stern and sad (so rare the smiles
Of sunlight) look'd the Lombard piles;
  Porch-pillars on the lion resting,
And sombre, old, colonnaded aisles.

O Milan, O the chanting quires,
The giant windows' blazon'd fires,
  The height, the space, the gloom, the glory!
A mount of marble, a hundred spires!

I climb'd the roofs at break of day;
Sun-smitten Alps before me lay.
I stood among the silent statues,
And statued pinnacles, mute as they.

How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair,
Was Monte Rosa, hanging there
A thousand shadowy-pencill'd valleys
And snowy dells in a golden air.

Remember how we came at last
To Como; shower and storm and blast
Had blown the lake beyond his limit,
And all was flooded; and how we pass'd

From Como, when the light was gray,
And in my head, for half the day,
The rich Virgilian rustic measure
Of Lari Maxume, all the way,

Like ballad-burthen music, kept,
As on the Lariano crept
To that fair port below the castle
Of Queen Theodolind, where we slept;

Or hardly slept, but watched awake
A cypress in the moonlight shake,
The moonlight touching o'er a terrace
One tall Agave above the lake.

What more? we took our last adieu,
And up the snowy Splugen drew,
But ere we reached the highest summit
I plucked a daisy, I gave it you.

It told of England then to me,
And now it tells of Italy.
O love, we two shall go no longer
To lands of summer across the sea;

So dear a life your arms enfold
Whose crying is a cry for gold:
Yet here to-night in this dark city,
When ill and weary, alone and cold,

I found, tho' crushed to hard and dry,
This nurseling of another sky
Still in the little book you lent me,
And where you tenderly laid it by:

And I forgot the clouded Forth,
The gloom that saddens heaven and earth,
The bitter east, the misty summer
And gray metropolis of the North.

Perchance, to lull the throbs of pain,
Perchance, to charm a vacant brain,
Perchance, to dream you still beside me,
My fancy fled to the South again.

At Twickenham again, in August, 1852, the second son, Hallam (the present Lord Tennyson), was born. We have already seen how vital a thing was fatherhood to the poet; his meditation on this event gave rise to the noble poem "Out of the Deep,"* though it was not finished or published for many years to come.

With regard to the laureateship, we must pause

* See page 343.

to ask whether it had any significance for Tennyson the poet, apart from the public honor which was done him. The officer of the court who wrote to offer the appointment was careful to say: "The ancient duties of this office, which consisted in laudatory odes to the Sovereign, have been long, as you are probably aware, in abeyance, and have never been called for during the reign of Her present Majesty." There was never, therefore, any obligation to produce poems *ex officio,* and Tennyson was one of the last men to take pleasure in feeling himself an attaché of the court. He nevertheless made his position as national poet something more considerable than it had been in the hands of Wordsworth. For this there are several reasons. One was that Tennyson was more a *gentleman,* in the formal British sense, than Wordsworth, and so more in touch, as a social unit, with the governing class. Another was that he became a valued personal friend of Queen Victoria, largely through her interest in *In Memoriam* and the consolation that she derived from it after the death of Prince Albert. Chiefly, however, Tennyson's success as national poet was due to the fact that his patriotism, and his interest in public life, were of a character to be interpreted by the poetic imagination rather better than Wordsworth's. The Wordsworth of "Tintern Abbey" and of "Michael" becomes ineffective, if not absurd, when he seeks to wield his poetic pen on land laws and labor legislation. Tennyson made no corresponding effort; but he was

deeply concerned with the development of that ordered freedom which he found alike in the English constitution and in his own garden, and—as we shall see later—gave it noble if not very thrilling expression. He also proved himself master of the enormously difficult art of seizing upon the deeper imaginative aspects of a public occasion. Thus for the marriage of the Prince of Wales to the Princess Alexandra of Denmark he struck precisely the right note, in associating the racial blend of the British people with their friendship for the sea-kings of the North:

> Bride of the heir of the kings of the sea—
> O joy to the people and joy to the throne,
> Come to us, love us and make us your own:
> For Saxon or Dane or Norman we,
> Teuton or Celt, or whatever we be,
> We are each all Dane in our welcome of thee
> Alexandra!

And for the International Exposition of 1862 he again caught up into poetry, when the idea was new, the wider significance of such undertakings:

> O ye, the wise who think, the wise who reign,
> From growing commerce loose her latest chain,
> And let the fair white-wing'd peacemaker fly
> To happy havens under all the sky,
> And mix the seasons and the golden hours;
> Till each man find his own in all men's good,
> And all men work in noble brotherhood,
> Breaking their mailèd fleets and armèd towers,
> And ruling by obeying Nature's powers,
> And gathering all the fruits of earth and crown'd
> with all her flowers.

No one, of course, would claim that in semi-official poems like these Tennyson's highest art was for a moment displayed. Despite his love of peace, and his high hopes for it, he was subject to the fates that for ages have stirred our hearts most not by deeds of peace but by those of war. And it was as celebrator of English soldiers and sailors, whether by historic reminiscence as in the ballad of "The Revenge," or by the portrayal of almost contemporary events, as in "The Charge of the Light Brigade" and "The Defence of Lucknow," that he did his most significant work as poet of the nation. "The Charge of the Light Brigade" may be set beside *In Memoriam,* grotesque as the contrast may seem, as one of the two poems which most endeared the author to his countrymen.

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:

They that had fought so well
Came tiro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

his poem Tennyson sent copies, as his per-
gift, to the soldiers in the Crimea, having
through an army chaplain that "it is the great-
vourite of the soldiers—half are singing it,
ll want to have it in black and white." An-
officer wrote from Scutari: "We had in hos-
a man of the Light Brigade, one of the few
survived that fatal mistake. . . . This pa-
t had received a kick in the chest from a horse
long after the battle of Balaclava, while in barracks
at Scutari. He was depressed in spirits, which pre-
vented him from throwing off the disease engen-
dered by the blow. The doctor remarked that he
wished the soldier could be roused. Amongst other
remedies leeches were prescribed. While watching
them I tried to enter into a conversation with him,
spoke of the charge, but could elicit only monosyl-
labic replies. A copy of Tennyson's poems having
been lent me that morning, I took it out and read
it. The man, with kindling eye, at once entered

upon a spirited description of the fatal gallop between the guns' mouths to and from that cannon-crowded height. He asked to hear it again, but, as by this time a number of convalescents were gathered around, I slipped out of the ward. . . . In a few days the invalid requested the doctor to discharge him for duty; . . . on giving the card the medical man murmured, 'Well done, Tennyson!'" Similar appreciation of "The Defence of Lucknow" was instanced by the fact that when Lionel Tennyson visited the fortress of Lucknow in 1886, the survivors of the siege were mustered on parade in his honor, and the old flag of Mutiny days was hoisted on the flagstaff. What Scott called "a mere poet" would have been indifferent to such things as these, but the Poet Laureate was not. In connection with another war-poem he boasted:

> And here the singer for his art
> Not all in vain may plead,
> "The song that nerves a nation's heart
> Is in itself a deed."

One more event, and the course of the poet's life will be established in its permanent happy course. This is the purchase of the estate of Farringford, on the Isle of Wight, which became the home of the Tennysons in 1853. It was a delightful retired spot, of the best English type, with peaceful meadowed outlooks, and such nearness to the sea as to let that be a part of daily outdoor life. The going to Farringford marked the poet's definite decision

to leave the neighborhood of London, and its social advantages, for the sake of what he had determined was the better part. In 1854 he sent a delightful verse letter to Frederick Maurice, which gives us on the whole the best description of the new home:

Should all our churchmen foam in spite
At you, so careful of the right,
  Yet one lay-hearth would give you welcome
(Take it and come) to the Isle of Wight;

Where, far from noise and smoke of town,
I watch the twilight falling brown
  All round a careless-order'd garden
Close to the ridge of a noble down.

You'll have no scandal while you dine,
But honest talk and wholesome wine,
  And only hear the magpie gossip
Garrulous under a roof of pine:

For groves of pine on either hand,
To break the blast of winter, stand;
  And, further on, the hoary Channel
Tumbles a billow on chalk and sand.

Let us also take two other glimpses of the place; one from the journal of Mrs. Tennyson, when, in 1856, it was decided to make their stay at Farringford permanent.

"We have agreed to buy, so I suppose this ivied home among the pine-trees is ours. Went to our withy holt: such beautiful blue hyacinths, primroses, daisies, marsh-marigolds and cuckoo-flowers. Wild

cherry-trees, too, with single snowy blossom, and the hawthorns white with their 'pearls of May.' The park has for many days been rich with cowslips and furze in bloom. The elms are a golden wreath at the foot of the down; to the north of the house the mespilus and horse-chestnut are in flower and the apple-trees are covered with rosy buds. A. dug the bed for the rhododendrons. A thrush was singing among the nightingales and other birds, as he said, 'mad with joy.' At sunset, the golden green of the trees, the burning splendour of Blackgang Chine and St. Catharine's, and the red bank of the primeval river, contrasted with the turkis-blue of the sea (that is our view from the drawing-room), make altogether a miracle of beauty. We are glad that Farringford is ours."

That she should consider the matters set forth in this passage worthy of space in the jottings of a journal, and that, so thinking, she could so express herself, would of itself be sufficient proof (if we needed proof) that Emily Tennyson was worthy to be a poet's wife. The other glimpse is from the *Records* of Anne Thackeray (Mrs. Ritchie), and lets us into the interior of the home:

"The house at Farringford itself seemed like a charmed palace, with green walls without, and speaking walls within. There hung Dante with his solemn nose and wreath; Italy gleamed over the doorways; friends' faces lined the passages, books filled the shelves, and a glow of crimson was everywhere; the oriel drawing-room window was full of green and golden leaves, of the sound of birds and of the distant sea."

These things are not trivialities, for friends of Tennyson or his work. There are some, even of great men, for whom a house is a mere necessity, of no more concern either to themselves or others than a Derby hat. For others it is a real part of themselves. So, while the Isle of Wight was not the poetic home of Tennyson in the significant sense in which the Lake Country is called Wordsworthshire, Farringford was nevertheless an element in what any who would know him must understand.

From this time his life had few events, except for those connected with his intellectual growth and work. To any young man of letters Tennyson's self-discipline should be a notable tonic example, nor is it without use for any who are still disposed to think of poetry as consisting only of such stuff as dreams are made of. He had now reached the point where he need not concern himself carefully respecting the making of a livelihood, nor had he any aspiration toward repute as a scholar; but he knew that the world of thought must furnish food for his creative life. Back in comparatively youthful days he had made out programs for his reading, like one of which his son preserves a copy:

Monday—History, German.
Tuesday—Chemistry, German.
Wednesday—Botany, German.
Thursday—Electricity, German.
Friday—Animal physiology, German.
Saturday—Mechanics.
Sunday—Theology.

Next week—Italian in the afternoon.
Third week—Greek.

In maturer periods, no doubt, he was less precise in his planning, but the process of growth was the same. At one time we find him beginning to study Hebrew with a view to making a version of the Book of *Job*. "One day he asked Jowett [Master of Balliol College] to give him a literal translation of one of the verses. 'But I can't read Hebrew,' said Jowett. 'What!' he exclaimed. 'You the priest of a great religion and can't read your own sacred books!'" In 1854 he took up Persian, and so strained his eyes over the work that he had to give it up in alarm, having seen "the Persian letters stalking like giants round the walls of his room." And if we pass to a record of his reading just before he entered his eightieth year, we find it including such old-time friends as Homer, Euripides, Gibbon, Keats, and the New Testament, with Matthew Arnold's essay on Tolstoy and John Fiske's *The Destiny of Man*. How his habit of keeping in touch with contemporary thought affected his poetry we shall have much occasion to notice a little later.

Maud appeared in 1855, the *Idylls of the King* in 1859 and again in various later enlarged editions, *Enoch Arden* in 1864. In the decade beginning 1873 Tennyson devoted a good part of his time to an entirely new undertaking, the production of a group of poetic dramas, especially the trilogy of

Harold, Becket, and *Queen Mary,* representing great moments in English history. As his son observes, "to begin publishing plays for the stage after he was fifty-six years of age was thought to be a hazardous experiment," and the wonder is, when one considers not only this but the essentially lyrical character of his art, that the failure was not more complete than any one has claimed it to be. Some of these dramas had splendid stage production, notably by Henry Irving, so that it was really given to Tennyson to do something toward the noble end of reviving the connection between poetry and the stage, which in England had for a long time fallen so sadly apart. His interpretations of history, too, were sound and worthy, in the view of judges whose authority can not be questioned. Yet despite all this, he was not, and could never have been, a dramatic artist; the plays remain less truly alive than almost anything else that he did; and he was as fortunate in turning back to other modes as he was in having escaped the usual tragedy of those who venture into the drama without a special license from Apollo. Meantime, in 1880 he published a volume of *Ballads;* in 1885 the collection named from the poem "Tiresias;" in 1889—at the age of eighty—*Demeter and Other Poems* (including the Ode for the Jubilee of Queen Victoria); and in 1892 the final volume of some twenty poems, called *The Death of Œnone.* At the opening of this last stands the incomparable tribute of love untouched by age, called "June Bracken and Heather":

There on the top of the down,
The wild heather round me and over me June's high blue,
When I looked at the bracken so bright and the heather so
brown,
I thought to myself I would offer this book to you,
This, and my love together,
To you that are seventy-seven,
With a faith as clear as the heights of the June-blue heaven,
And a fancy as summer-new
As the green of the bracken amid the gloom of the heather.

There are few records of creative energy still virile and fruitful through a life as long as this. It can not be claimed that the later of Tennyson's volumes keep to the full level of those of his maturity. The volume of 1880, containing "Rizpah," "The Revenge," and the "De Profundis," perhaps marks the summit of his poetic slope; in those published thereafter there are few poems which would be seriously missed, for their intrinsic beauty or power, if they were to be excluded from his works. But even this is very different from the case of Wordsworth, of whom it has been said that nothing written beyond his thirtieth year added perceptibly to his attainment. And there are exceptions, in Tennyson's later work (no two readers would agree in enumerating them), such as "The Charge of the Heavy Brigade," "To Virgil," "Merlin and the Gleam," and—most notable of all—"Crossing the Bar." This last was written on an October day in 1889, on the way home to Farringford from the summer home, Aldworth, which Tennyson had built in Sussex in 1868. When he showed the poem to

his son that evening, Hallam observed, "That is the crown of your life's work." "It came in a moment," said Tennyson. Three years later, his son tells us, "a few days before my father's death he said to me, 'Mind you put "Crossing the Bar" at the end of all editions of my poems.' "

In 1884 the Poet Laureate had been made a peer of the realm. Some years before this a baronetcy had been offered him by the queen, through Gladstone and again through Disraeli, but he had asked the privilege of remaining "plain Mr.," though expressing the wish that the honor might be given to his son and so transmitted to his descendants. As it was unheard-of to confer a title on a son in the lifetime of his father, there was no solution that way. When at length Gladstone was able to propose a peerage, Tennyson hesitated for some time, then accepted. "Why should I be selfish," he wrote, "and not suffer an honour (as Gladstone says) to be done to literature in my name?" When he took his seat in the House of Lords it was on what are called the "cross benches," unidentified with either political party; for he believed that excess of party feeling was one of the sins of the age.

At this point it is natural to try to sum up one's impressions of Tennyson's personality, though to do so in brief is, as always, unsatisfying. The man himself is best studied in his letters, in those of his friends, and in other memorials such as his son brought together in his biography. Of the impression made by his presence Carlyle's notes are the

most vivid ever set down: "A fine, large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-coloured, shaggy-headed man is Alfred; dusky, smoky, free-and-easy; who swims outwardly and inwardly, with great composure, in an articulate element as of tranquil chaos and tobacco-smoke; great now and then when he does emerge; a most restful, brotherly, solid-hearted man." Or again, in a letter to Emerson: "One of the finest-looking men in the world—a great shock of rough dusky dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate. . . . His voice is musical, metallic, fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous; I do not meet in these late decades such company over a pipe!"

A tendency to melancholy, characteristic — it would seem — of all the Tennysons, commonly tended to give the poet a certain somberness of manner; in his youth it sometimes threatened him with serious darkness of soul, but in his maturity he overcame its weaker side, much as Dr. Johnson did, letting the native disposition show itself in a greater withdrawal from society than was altogether good for man or poet, as well as in a kind of gruffness displayed when he was confronted by persons to whom he felt no attraction. "I am never the least shy before great men," he once said; but it was often noted that he was uncomfortably diffident in the presence of strangers who wished merely to look on his greatness, and he would not

scruple to meet rudeness with more rudeness—especially, it must be confessed, in the case of Americans. His plain speech was commonly marked by a grimly whimsical humor which could scarcely offend one with a healthy sense for fun. Mr. Benson has brought together a number of pleasant incidents illustrative of this, of which I quote three or four:

"Some girl in his presence spoke of a marriage, lately arranged between two acquaintances of her own, as a 'penniless' marriage. Tennyson glared, rummaged in his pocket, produced a penny, and slapped it down before her, saying, 'There! I give you that, for that is the god you worship.'"

"He was reading *Lycidas* aloud to some friends in 1870. When he had done, a girl present said that she had never read *Paradise Lost*. 'Shameless daughter of your age!' said the Bard."

"In 1887 he went to see his eldest brother Frederick, who was greatly occupied with the phenomena of Spiritualism, and who tried to persuade the Laureate to go seriously into the question. The Poet heard him patiently, and then said with great emphasis, 'I am convinced that God and the ghosts of men would choose something other than mere table-legs through which to speak to the heart of man.'"

"Sir Henry Taylor, in his Autobiography, quotes a delightful undated letter, written by Mrs. Cameron about the year 1860: . . . 'He was very violent with the girls on the subject of the rage for autographs. He said he believed every crime and every vice in the world were connected with the passion

for autographs and anecdotes and records; that the desiring anecdotes and acquaintance with the lives of great men was treating them like pigs, to be ripped open for the public; that he knew he himself should be ripped open like a pig; that he thanked God Almighty with his whole heart and soul that he knew nothing, and that the world knew nothing, of Shakespeare but his writings. . . . Then he said that the post for two days had brought *him* no letters, and that he thought there was a sort of syncope in the world as to him and his fame!'"

Mr. Benson observes that "the unconscious transition in the last remark to the egotistic vein is as characteristic as the violence of the earlier words;" and it is indeed true that Tennyson combined in a curious way the point of view of a great man, in his indifference to the mere trappings of fame, with that of a young or minor poet in a certain professional vanity and a concern for what was thought and said of him. He was frankly fond of reading aloud his own verses, and pointing out what was good in them,—a temperament much in contrast with Browning's, who once spoke of his son as having a *mother* who was a genius, in a fashion to imply that the paternal inheritance was negligible, and who gave the impression of never bothering about what he had written when once it was published. We have already noted Tennyson's sensitiveness to criticism, even that from unworthy sources. In this connection a letter of his friend Edward Fitzgerald's is penetratingly memorable: "When Tennyson was telling me of how the *Quarterly* abused him (hu-

morously too), and desirous of knowing why one did not care for his later works, etc., I thought that if he had lived an active life, as Scott and Shakespeare, or even ridden, shot, drunk, and played the devil, as Byron, he would have done much more, and talked about it much less. 'You know,' said Scott to Lockhart, 'that I don't care a curse about what I write,' and one sees he did not. I don't believe it was far otherwise with Shakespeare." Yet, after all, we can not hope that poets shall be wholly alike, even in good things. Certainly we should not wish Tennyson to have resembled Scott in his complete objectivity—his freedom from concern about his art and its delicate connection with his deepest personality; one may even say that we should not wish him to have been quite like Shakespeare. Ordinarily we may expect that a great *lyrical* poet will be characterized by a sensitiveness, and a kind of egotism, which are nevertheless lifted above the pettiness of such qualities by his fineness of soul.

The closing years of Tennyson's life were wholly happy and peaceful, except for the death of his second son, Lionel, on his way home from India in 1886. The last days were passed in the summer home at Aldworth, with walks and reading almost to the end. Toward the end of September, 1892, he fell ill, and died on October sixth. The picture of the closing scene has been reverently drawn by his son, in a manner that reminds one of the beautiful narrative of the death of Scott as given by Lockhart.

"At noon he called out, 'Where is my Shakespeare? I must have my Shakespeare.' Then he said, 'I want the blinds up, I want to see the sky and the light.' . . . It was a glorious morning, and the warm sunshine was flooding the weald of Sussex and the line of South Downs, which were seen from his window. . . .

"[The next day] at two o'clock he again asked for his Shakespeare and lay with his hand resting on it open, and tried to read it. . . . All the afternoon he was much the same, occasionally saying a word or two to us, and hearing every sound, when he would open his eyes wide, look round the room, then close them again. . . . Suddenly he gathered himself together and spoke one word about himself to the doctor, 'Death?' Dr. Dabbs bowed his head, and he said, 'That's well.' His last food was taken at a quarter to four, and he tried to read, but could not. He exclaimed, 'I have opened it.' Whether this referred to the Shakespeare, opened by him at

> Hang there like fruit, my soul,
> Till the tree die,

which he always called among the tenderest lines in Shakespeare; or whether one of his last poems, of which he was fond, was running through his head, I can not tell:

> Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that Power which alone is great,
> Nor the myriad world, His shadow, nor the silent Opener of the Gate.

He then spoke his last words, a farewell blessing, to my mother and myself.

"For the next hours the full moon flooded the room and the great landscape outside with light; and we watched in solemn stillness. His patience and quiet strength had power upon those who were nearest and dearest to him; we felt thankful for the love and the utter peace of it all; and his own lines of comfort from *In Memoriam* were strongly borne in upon us. He was quite restful, holding my wife's hand, and, as he was passing away, I spoke over him his own prayer, 'God accept him! Christ receive him!' "

A poet's death, as there had been a poet's character and a poet's life. Just what is meant by this, apart from vague sentiment? We have already seen what Tennyson himself would have meant, at least in part: a life "dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love." This represents the intensity and the nobility of the poetic feeling. Again, it means a life of fidelity to art—counting no labor too long in order that that which is perfect may come, so far as it is given one to further its coming. Still further, if we compare it with the character and life of what we call a man of action,—in commerce, professional work, or statecraft,—it means, not the withdrawal from all touch with these things, but a participation in them which is primarily spiritual, the joy of visible achievement being sacrificed for the joy of understanding and interpretation. In other words, what we must all do for ourselves at occasional fugitive moments of joy and insight, one who is in part a poet does more

often and more completely, one who is wholly a poet does for us with the consecration of his whole life. Such was Tennyson.

His own career as a writer he interpreted in the poem called "Merlin and the Gleam," published at the age of eighty, which his son tells us he hoped would even be sufficient to make a biography unnecessary. Here, Tennyson explained, the Gleam —the magic taught by Merlin—is the higher poetic imagination. In the second stanza he represents the poetry that flowed from the simple joy of his youth; in the third he refers to the period of silence and shadow that followed the unsympathetic reception of his earlier poems, from which the faithful Gleam restored him. The fourth stanza describes the poetry of the more romantic sort, touched especially by renewed joy in nature; the fifth, the pastoral poetry of the *English Idyls* and the like; the sixth, the epic tales of King Arthur. In the seventh he alludes to the sorrow of Hallam's death, fusing for the moment the personality of that Arthur and him of the epic story, and goes on to show how the light was again renewed in the faith which inspired *In Memoriam.* In the eighth stanza he portrays his maturer life, when everywhere—in hamlet or city —the ubiquitous mystery of death was touched by the still radiant light, now hovering on the shore of old age. And finally, in the glorious ninth stanza, he calls to youth to follow him in the same track of idealism and faith.

MERLIN AND THE GLEAM

I

O young Mariner,
You from the haven
Under the sea-cliff,
You that are watching
The gray Magician
With eyes of wonder,
I am Merlin,
And *I* am dying,
I am Merlin
Who follow The Gleam.

II

Mighty the Wizard
Who found me at sunrise
Sleeping, and woke me
And learn'd me Magic!
Great the Master,
And sweet the Magic,
When over the valley,
In early summers,
Over the mountain,
On human faces,
And all around me,
Moving to melody,
Floated The Gleam.

III

Once at the croak of the Raven
who cross'd it,
A barbarous people,
Blind to the magic,

And deaf to the melody,
Snarl'd at and cursed me.
A demon vex'd me,
The light retreated,
The landskip darken'd,
The melody deaden'd,
The Master whisper'd
"Follow The Gleam."

IV

Then to the melody,
Over a wilderness
Gliding, and glancing at
Elf of the woodland,
Gnome of the cavern,
Griffin and Giant,
And dancing of Fairies
In desolate hollows,
And wraiths of the mountain,
And rolling of dragons
By warble of water,
Or cataract music
Of falling torrents,
Flitted The Gleam.

V

Down from the mountain
And over the level,
And streaming and shining on
Silent river,
Silvery willow,
Pasture and plowland,
Innocent maidens,
Garrulous children,
Homestead and harvest,

Reaper and gleaner,
And rough-ruddy faces
Of lowly labour,
Slided The Gleam—

VI

Then, with a melody
Stronger and statelier,
Led me at length
To the city and palace
Of Arthur the king;
Touch'd at the golden
Cross of the churches,
Flash'd on the Tournament,
Flicker'd and bicker'd
From helmet to helmet,
And last on the forehead
Of Arthur the blameless
Rested The Gleam.

VII

Clouds and darkness
Closed upon Camelot;
Arthur had vanish'd
I knew not whither,
The king who loved me,
And cannot die;
For out of the darkness
Silent and slowly
The Gleam, that had waned to a
wintry glimmer
On icy fallow
And faded forest,
Drew to the valley
Named of the shadow,

And slowly brightening
Out of the glimmer,
And slowly moving again to a melody
Yearningly tender,
Fell on the shadow,
No longer a shadow,
But clothed with The Gleam.

VIII

And broader and brighter
The Gleam flying onward,
Wed to the melody,
Sang thro' the world;
And slower and fainter,
Old and weary,
But eager to follow,
I saw, whenever
In passing it glanced upon
Hamlet or city,
That under the Crosses
The dead man's garden,
The mortal hillock,
Would break into blossom;
And so to the land's
Last limit I came—
And can no longer,
But die rejoicing,
For thro' the Magic
Of Him the Mighty,
Who taught me in childhood,
There on the border
Of boundless Ocean,
And all but in Heaven
Hovers The Gleam.

IX

Not of the sunlight,
Not of the moonlight,
Not of the starlight!
O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel,
And crowd your canvas,
And, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow The Gleam.

II

LYRICAL POETRY

THE lyrical element in poetry may be said to be due to a personal experience made permanent through its creation of some feeling which finds utterance in melody and rhythm. At its simplest and purest, this utterance is a mere outburst of song—a Shakespearean "Hey nonny no" or the "Green grow the rushes—O" of Burns. But interwoven with reflective matter it may leave further and further behind the passionate simplicity of musical expression, and reach the thoughtful complexity of a sonnet, an elegy, or an ode. Again, it may appear not by way of a separate composition, but as an element in the telling of a story in whatever form; for one can not say that Macbeth's

> To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow,

or Arthur's

> But now farewell; I am going a long way,

is any less lyrical than song or sonnet. At any moment, and in any poetic form, there may come that leap of the pulses, that touch of personal fervor,

which suggests—if it does not demand—musical support, and which we are likely to call "lyrical."

In this sense Tennyson is many parts lyrist. He wrote but few pure songs, to be sure, and he wrote a number of important works in forms which are called "objective" and are supposed to be free from the note of personal expression; but normally he was an utterer of personal feeling. Not of pure feeling, however, so much as feeling interwoven with, and interpreted by, thought. This may be exemplified by some comparison of his lyrics of different kinds. For instance, take the familiar cradle song:

> Sweet and low, sweet and low,
> Wind of the western sea,
> Low, low, breathe and blow,
> Wind of the western sea!
> Over the rolling waters go,
> Come from the dying moon, and blow,
> Blow him again to me;
> While my little one, while my pretty one,
> sleeps.
>
> Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
> Father will come to thee soon;
> Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
> Father will come to thee soon;
> Father will come to his babe in the nest,
> Silver sails all out of the west
> Under the silver moon:
> Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one,
> sleep.

This calls insistently for music; and when one has

once sung it to a setting like Barnby's, he will thereafter think of it in terms of the musical rhythm rather than of the mere verse-rhythm, and he will not care to *read* it for the purpose of dwelling thoughtfully on word or phrase. Now, for contrast, consider this equally familiar stanza:

> Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies,
> I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

Here we do not wish or seek for music; the reflective element is dominant; we wish chiefly to linger on the spoken words.

The first of these methods is primarily that of Burns; the second is primarily that of Wordsworth.* Neither is typically Tennyson's—though both the poems, of course, are his. For the more representative of Tennyson's lyrics—such as "Break, break, break," "Ring out, wild bells," or "Sunset and evening star"—show a perfect blend of the two elements, the melodic and the reflective. They may be sung—they sometimes are; but we are content with them, even rejoice in them, when they are read. Of this blended type another specimen is this from *The Princess:*

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* Though Wordsworth, true to the old theory of the type, said that his lyrical poems could not have their full force without a *supposed* musical accompaniment.

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

We are told that this was sung by a maid, who "smote her harp" as she rendered it. Yet for most of us it is a classic not of song but of spoken verse, and I know not whether it has even been set to music. If one considers why this should be so, he may notice first the unusual blank-verse form of the lyric; but he will presently realize that this form is merely the incident of something deeper—the lingering style, thoughtfully developing the feeling and the images, and inviting us to mental activity as dis-

tinguished from merely sensuous sympathy. Thus, while the refrain ends each stanza like the refrain of a song, it is not a mere repetition of a melodic unit, but each time means something different because of the thought which has gathered about the theme. All this is characteristic of modern introspective lyric, compared with the more naïve and primitive kinds, and in particular it is characteristic of Tennyson.

It follows from what we have seen of the nature of the lyric that the powers of a lyrical poet may be said to be chiefly two: that which appears in the rhythmic and melodic form of his verse, marking its kinship with musical expression, and that which is concerned—more inwardly—with the imaginative or reflective development of personal feeling. Let us look at Tennyson's lyrical work from these two standpoints.

I. Lyrical Form

It is one of the grotesque features of the youthful arrogance of some of our contemporaries that they are in the habit of referring to the Victorians, Tennyson in particular, as timidly conservative in matters of metrical form, and of implying that young poets who become disciples of Tennyson's art will find themselves bound with shackles from which only the latest experiments in "free verse" can bring deliverance. The arrogance of such a view is more than matched by its ignorance. The Victorian period was the most fruitful in metrical

experimentation that modern poetry had seen, and Tennyson was its chief master in this field. The only respect in which his progressiveness is distinguished from the work of those who profess to have outstripped him is that it was always rooted and grounded in the work of his predecessors—in the traditions of English poetry, and the rhythms not only of his own language but of the classical tongues. That is, within the natural field of native English rhythm, as well as of Latin rhythm adapted into English, he roamed with absolute freedom; and while it would be too much to say that he found all that there was to find in this field, it is true that one who really knows the subject will not often discover anything rhythmically worth while which Tennyson had not discovered and put to use. Of the trisyllabic meters he did not avail himself very greatly, as compared with Swinburne and many others of the younger generation, yet when he wished he could use them with unsurpassed effectiveness, as in the sonorous "Wages"—

> Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,

or the freer form found in "Rizpah" and other monologues. For long lines he often preferred the more restrained trochaic movement, as in "Locksley Hall" and the "Hymn to the Sun." This rhythm appears at its noblest in the lines "To Virgil," which were written for the Mantuans on the nineteenth centenary of Virgil's death, and which F. W. H.

Myers called Tennyson's most perfect poem—one that "touches the high-water mark of English song":

Roman Virgil, thou that singest
Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,
Ilion falling, Rome arising,
wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre;

Landscape-lover, lord of language
more than he that sang the Works and Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden phrase;

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd;
All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word;

Poet of the happy Tityrus
piping underneath his beechen bowers;
Poet of the poet-satyr
whom the laughing shepherd bound with flowers;

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow,
unlaborious earth and oarless sea;

Thou that seest Universal
Nature moved by Universal Mind;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
at the doubtful doom of human kind;

Light among the vanish'd ages;
star that gildest yet this phantom shore;
Golden branch amid the shadows,
kings and realms that pass to rise no more;

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
fallen every purple Cæsar's dome—
Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm
sound for ever of Imperial Rome—

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd,
and the Rome of freemen holds her place,
I, from out the Northern Island
sunder'd once from all the human race,

I salute thee, Mantovano,
I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
ever moulded by the lips of man.

The last line of this poem seems to hint that the long meter, approximating in number of syllables to the Virgilian hexameter, might be taken as an attempt to win something of its effect for English ears. At other times, certainly, as I have already hinted, Tennyson interested himself not a little in reproducing the movement of Latin rhythms, especially those of Horace and Catullus. For the most part these experiments are merely playful, as in the delightful "Hendecasyllabics":

O you chorus of indolent reviewers,
Irresponsible, indolent reviewers,
Look, I come to the test, a tiny poem
All composed in a metre of Catullus,
All in quantity, careful of my motion,
Like the skater on ice that hardly bears him.

But in at least one instance they resulted in a lyric

which is highly prized for its own sake, the "alcaics" on Milton:

O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,
Tower, as the deep-dom'd empyrean
Rings to the roar of an angel onset—
Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
And bloom profuse and cedar arches
Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India
Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
Whisper in odorous heights of even.

But the happiest and most precious of Tennyson's studies in rhythm are those in which he uses the art of metrical variation for the purpose of developing some imaginative theme in a form subtly harmonious with the sense. Much nonsense has been written on this matter of the adaptation of rhythm to sentiment, and we should guard against two common errors concerning it: one, that any rhythm will of itself express a particular idea or feeling with unmistakable definiteness; the other, that one can not obtain perfectly expressive metrical variation inside the fixed form of a standard meter. While both these notions are false, it is nevertheless true that a master of verse may sometimes dare greatly,

and alter his rhythm—so to say—symphonically, in accordance with the development of his subject-matter, thereby obtaining extraordinary effects. Tennyson, who normally obtained his effects inside the regular metrical form, on occasion did these bolder things. For instance, there is a wonderful passage in the "Vision of Sin," where the verse, in describing the dance of the spirits of sensuality, passes into a great *accelerando e crescendo:*

Then methought I heard a mellow sound,
Gathering up from all the lower ground;
Narrowing in to where they sat assembled
Low voluptuous music winding trembled,
Wov'n in circles: they that heard it sigh'd,
Panted hand-in-hand with faces pale,
Swung themselves, and in low tones replied;
Till the fountain spouted, showering wide
Sleet of diamond-drift and pearly hail;
Then the music touch'd the gates and died;
Rose again from where it seem'd to fail,
Storm'd in orbs of song, a growing gale;
Till thronging in and in, to where they waited,
As 'twere a hundred-throated nightingale,
The strong tempestuous treble throbb'd and
palpitated;
Ran into its giddiest whirl of sound,
Caught the sparkles, and in circles,
Purple gauzes, golden hazes, liquid mazes,
Flung the torrent rainbow round:
Then they started from their places,
Moved with violence, changed in hue,
Caught each other with wild grimaces,
Half-invisible to the view,

Wheeling with precipitate paces
To the melody, till they flew,
Hair, and eyes, and limbs, and faces,
Twisted hard in fierce embraces,
Like to Furies, like to Graces,
Dash'd together in blinding dew:
Till, kill'd with some luxurious agony,
The nerve-dissolving melody
Flutter'd headlong from the sky.

Another extraordinary instance of the power of rhythmic form to represent movement is found in the swift and fiery representation of the "Charge of the Heavy Brigade." This poem, dealing with an incident in the same battle of Balaclava in which occurred the tragic "charge of the Light Brigade," seems to me to be a finer ballad than the better-known companion piece.

THE CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE AT BALACLAVA

October 25, 1854

I

The charge of the gallant three hundred, the Heavy Brigade!
Down the hill, down the hill, thousands of Russians,
Thousands of horsemen, drew to the valley—and stay'd;
For Scarlett and Scarlett's three hundred were riding by
When the points of the Russian lances arose in the sky;
And he call'd "Left wheel into line!" and they wheel'd and obeyed.
Then he look'd at the host that had halted he knew not why,
And he turn'd half round, and he bade his trumpeter sound

To the charge, and he rode on ahead, as he waved his blade
To the gallant three hundred whose glory will never die—
"Follow!" and up the hill, up the hill, up the hill,
Follow'd the Heavy Brigade.

II

The trumpet, the gallop, the charge, and the might of the fight!
Thousands of horsemen had gather'd there on the height,
With a wing push'd out to the left and a wing to the right,
And who shall escape if they close? but he dash'd up alone
Thro' the great gray slope of men,
Sway'd his sabre, and held his own
Like an Englishman there and then;
All in a moment follow'd with force
Three that were next in their fiery course,
Wedged themselves in between horse and horse,
Fought for their lives in the narrow gap they had made—
Four amid thousands, and up the hill, up the hill,
Gallop'd the gallant three hundred, the Heavy Brigade.

III

Fell like a cannonshot,
Burst like a thunderbolt,
Crash'd like a hurricane,
Broke thro' the mass from below,
Drove thro' the midst of the foe,
Plunged up and down, to and fro,
Rode flashing blow upon blow,
Brave Inniskillens and Greys
Whirling their sabres in circles of light!
And some of us, all in amaze,
Who were held for a while from the fight,
And were only standing at gaze,
When the dark-muffled Russian crowd
Folded its wings from the left and the right,
And roll'd them around like a cloud,—

O mad for the charge and the battle were we,
When our own good redcoats sank from sight,
Like drops of blood in a dark-gray sea,
And we turn'd to each other, whispering, all dismay'd,
"Lost are the gallant three hundred of Scarlett's Brigade!"

IV

"Lost one and all" were the words
Mutter'd in our dismay;
But they rode like victors and lords
Thro' the forest of lances and swords
In the heart of the Russian hordes,
They rode, or they stood at bay—
Struck with the sword-hand and slew,
Down with the bridle-hand drew
The foe from the saddle and threw
Underfoot there in the fray—
Ranged like a storm or stood like a rock
In the wave of a stormy day;
Till suddenly shock upon shock
Stagger'd the mass from without,
Drove it in wild disarray,
For our men gallop'd up with a cheer and a shout,
And the foeman surged, and waver'd, and reel'd
Up the hill, up the hill, up the hill, out of the field,
And over the brow and away.

V

Glory to each and to all, and the charge that they made!
Glory to all the three hundred, and all the Brigade!

Less striking, but more elaborate and sustained, are the metrical variations in the "Wellington Ode," the most artistic of all the quasi-official poems of the laureateship. This was almost the only experi-

ment of Tennyson's in the so-called "irregular ode," and the result was not, on the whole, sufficiently admired to encourage him to do more work of the same character. It is nevertheless a notable example of "free rhythm" in the better sense of the term. The opening strophe suggests the irregular movement of the crowds in the streets, on the day when the duke is to be buried. In the second our attention is turned toward St. Paul's Cathedral, and in the third the procession begins to move. Later we approach the cathedral, and hear the sound of tolling bell mingle with that of the music within. The movement of the remaining strophes is one of thought rather than action, but at the close we find ourselves inside the cathedral, hearing the dead march, the "Dust to dust" of the burial service, and the final prayer:

> Hush, the Dead March wails in the people's ears:
> The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs and
> tears:
> The black earth yawns: the mortal disappears;
> Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
> He is gone who seem'd so great.—
> Gone; but nothing can bereave him
> Of the force he made his own
> Being here, and we believe him
> Something far advanced in state,
> And that he wears a truer crown
> Than any wreath that man can weave him.
> Speak no more of his renown,
> Lay your earthly fancies down,
> And in the vast cathedral leave him,—
> God accept him, Christ receive him.

At the height of Tennyson's rhythmical symphonies we should probably place the ballad of "The Revenge." No one, so far as I know, has ever instanced this poem under the head of "free verse," yet it would be very difficult to name its metrical type. Just as one is prepared to call it "trochaic" it becomes clearly trisyllabic; just as we are sure it is "anapestic" it falls back into the rhythm of twos or fours which carries Sir Richard's final march:

> And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore him then,
> Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard caught at last.

Lovers of verse form may profitably study it in a hundred details,—the extraordinary effect produced by the sudden opening on a bold accent in stanza six:

> Thousands of their soldiers look'd down from their decks and laugh'd;

the change of movement, strikingly orchestral in effect, for the sunset scene of stanza nine:

> And the sun went down, and the stars came out far over the summer sea;

the glorious emphasis obtained by the unexpected medial pause and rhyme in the hero's last words,

> "With a joyful spirit I, Sir Richard Grenville, die;"

and the hurrying, windy epilogue which dismisses

the whole Armada to destruction. It is all a metrical *tour de force* (not to speak here of its more inward qualities) which defies both conventional critic and uncrafty imitator.

THE REVENGE

A Ballad of the Fleet

I

At Flores in the Azóres Sir Richard Grenville lay,
And a pinnace, like a flutter'd bird, came flying from far away:
"Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-three!"
Then sware Lord Thomas Howard: "'Fore God I am no coward;
But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out of gear,
And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but follow quick.
We are six ships of the line; can we fight with fifty-three?"

II

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville: "I know you are no coward;
You fly them for a moment to fight with them again.
But I've ninety men and more that are lying sick ashore.
I should count myself the coward if I left them, my Lord Howard,
To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of Spain."

III

So Lord Howard pass'd away with five ships of war that day,
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer heaven;
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men from the land
Very carefully and slow,
Men of Bideford in Devon,
And we laid them on the ballast down below;

For we brought them all aboard,
And they bless'd him in their pain, that they were not left to Spain,
To the thumbscrew and the stake, for the glory of the Lord.

IV

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and to fight,
And he sail'd away from Flores till the Spaniard came in sight,
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the weather bow,
"Shall we fight or shall we fly?
Good Sir Richard, tell us now,
For to fight is but to die!
There'll be little of us left by the time this sun be set."
And Sir Richard said again: "We be all good English men.
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the devil,
For I never turn'd my back upon Don or devil yet."

V

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh'd, and we roar'd a hurrah, and so
The little Revenge ran on sheer into the heart of the foe,
With her hundred fighters on deck, and her ninety sick below;
For half of their fleet to the right and half to the left were seen,
And the little Revenge ran on thro' the long sea-lane between.

VI

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down from their decks and laugh'd,
Thousands of their seamen made mock at the mad little craft

Running on and on, till delay'd
By their mountain-like San Philip that, of fifteen hundred tons,
And up-shadowing high above us with her yawning tiers of guns,
Took the breath from our sails, and we stay'd.

VII

And while now the great San Philip hung above us like a cloud
Whence the thunderbolt will fall
Long and loud,
Four galleons drew away
From the Spanish fleet that day,
And two upon the larboard and two upon the starboard lay,
And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

VIII

But anon the great San Philip, she bethought herself and went,
Having that within her womb that had left her ill content;
And the rest they came aboard us, and they fought us hand to hand,
For a dozen times they came with their pikes and musqueteers,
And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog that shakes his ears
When he leaps from the water to the land.

IX

And the sun went down, and the stars came out far over the summer sea,
But never a moment ceased the fight of the one and the fifty-three.

Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built galleons came,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-thunder and flame;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with her dead and her shame.
For some were sunk and many were shatter'd, and so could fight us no more—
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world before?

X

For he said "Fight on! fight on!"
Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck;
And it chanced that, when half of the short summer night was gone,
With a grisly wound to be dress'd he had left the deck,
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly dead,
And himself he was wounded again in the side and the head,
And he said "Fight on! fight on!"

XI

And the night went down, and the sun smiled out far over the summer sea,
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay round us all in a ring;
But they dared not touch us again, for they fear'd that we still could sting,
So they watch'd what the end would be.
And we had not fought them in vain,
But in perilous plight were we,
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,
And half of the rest of us maim'd for life
In the crash of the cannonades and the desperate strife;

And the sick men down in the hold were most of them stark
and cold,
And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the powder was
all of it spent;
And the masts and the rigging were lying over the side;
But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,
"We have fought such a fight for a day and a night
As may never be fought again!
We have won great glory, my men!
And a day less or more
At sea or ashore,
We die—does it matter when?
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split her in twain!
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain!"

XII

And the gunner said "Ay, ay," but the seamen made reply:
"We have children, we have wives,
And the Lord hath spared our lives.
We will make the Spaniards promise, if we yield, to let us go;
We shall live to fight again and to strike another blow."
And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded to the foe.

XIII

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore him then,
Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard caught at
last,
And they praised him to his face with their courtly foreign
grace;
But he rose upon their decks, and he cried:
"I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant man and
true;
I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do:
With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Grenville die!"
And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

XIV

And they stared at the dead that had been so valiant and true,
And had holden the power and glory of Spain so cheap
That he dared her with one little ship and his English few;
Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught they knew,
But they sank his body with honour down into the deep,
And they mann'd the Revenge with a swarthier alien crew,
And away she sail'd with her loss and long'd for her own;
When a wind from the lands they had ruin'd awoke from sleep,
And the water began to heave and the weather to moan,
And or ever that evening ended a great gale blew,
And a wave like the wave that is raised by an earthquake grew,
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their masts and their flags,
And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-shatter'd navy of Spain,
And the little Revenge herself went down by the island crags
To be lost evermore in the main.

Lyrical form is not only a matter of rhythm; it is also in large degree a matter of what is sometimes called melody, sometimes tone-color—what might, by analogy with music, very well be called orchestration. That is, it is involved in the word sounds—vowels and consonants of different qualities—which the poet may make use of as the composer avails himself of the various qualities of woodwinds, brasses, and strings. Here again a good deal of nonsense has been written in the well-meant effort to analyze the correspondence between these tonal values and the ideas associated with them. Just

as with rhythm, we can not safely assume that any sounds have of themselves the power to suggest definite ideas, or even distinct tones of emotion, apart from the meanings of words. The sound "ing" has no representative value in the words "thing" and "bring," nor the sound "ang" in the words "hang" and "tang." Yet on the other hand we all feel that in words like "ring" and "clang" the sound-values have an agreeable appropriateness to the meanings, and we know that poets are fond of emphasizing such appropriateness. We also know that poets, rather more than writers of prose, are sensitive to the mere kinship of neighboring sounds, and to their intrinsic qualities which produce effects analogous to those of color in the art of painting; that is, we may derive the same sort of pleasure from the repetition of an agreeable sound in a verse or a succession of verses that we derive from a picture in which a certain color-tone—a glint of orange, it may be—is repeated in sky, foliage, and woman's hair. These things are a bit too subtle and spontaneous to bear close analysis; appreciative readers enjoy them without knowing it, more than half the time, and those who do not are perhaps hopeless. All of which may be said to be wrapped up in a brief remark that Tennyson once made respecting a lovely line of his in "The Gardener's Daughter"—

> The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm.

"To nine-tenths of all English men and women," he said, " 'The merry blackbird sang among the

trees' would seem quite as good a line." This was rather over-pessimistic. Surely many a reader who never paused to count the "u's" and "l's" in the line must have enjoyed them naïvely; otherwise Tennyson would not have had the readers that he did. For of all the Victorians—and therefore of all English poets since Milton—he was the most finished master of this aspect of poetic form. Without, as a rule, falling into the excessive alliteration of Swinburne or the almost enervating tonal sweetness of the young Rossetti, he knew every "trick o' the tool's true play" which his successors made more conspicuous.

In the youthful poems, as with Shakespeare and many another, Tennyson's sensuous beauty of sound was often too self-sufficient; maturity had not yet wrought the more substantial fabric to which it should be accessory. This is the normal order of development. Look, for example, at the very first poem in the "Juvenilia" of the collected works:

> At eve the beetle boometh
> Athwart the thicket lone:
> At noon the wild bee hummeth
> About the moss'd headstone:
> At midnight the moon cometh,
> And looketh down alone.

In the volume of 1833 the element of melody is made to serve the purpose of serious lyrical and narrative themes. Yet in such a poem as "The Lady

of Shalott" it is still so salient that one almost feels that he must sing, rather than read, the verse:

> Only reapers, reaping early
> In among the bearded barley
> Hear a song that echoes cheerly
> Down the river winding clearly,
> Down to tower'd Camelot:
> And by moon the reaper weary,
> Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
> Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
> Lady of Shalott."

Lovely as this is, the forcing of the note gives a bit too much opportunity for Edward Lear's imitation:

> Oh! my aged Uncle Arly,
> Sitting on a heap of barley
> Through the silent hours of night,
> Close beside a leafy thicket;
> On his nose there was a cricket,
> In his hat a railway ticket,
> But his shoes were far too tight.

In "Œnone," too, one is tempted so to rejoice in the mere sensuous richness of such lines as

> Idalian Aphrodite beautiful

or

> Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat

as to care not what happens to the speaker—or even to suspect that she herself had forgotten to care! In "The Lotos-Eaters," on the other hand, since

the very theme of the poem is forgetfulness of action because of beauty, one must count the outstanding loveliness of sound as wholly legitimate.

THE LOTOS-EATERS

"Courage!" he said, and pointed toward the land,
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemèd always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon,
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmèd sunset linger'd low adown
In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seem'd the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them,
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, "We will return no more;"
And all at once they sang, "Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

In Tennyson's later poems, as I have intimated, these tonal elements are found to be more and more incidental, though they may still rise into salient orchestral novelties, as in the refrain of Arthur's knights' song,

Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the king reign,

the

Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet

of *In Memoriam,* or the "Blow, bugle, blow!" of the song in *The Princess.* This last should be read entire, in connection with the present subject:

The splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story:
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river:
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

Nor must we forget the less familiar song, from the same work, whose ending is made of one of Tennyson's most remarkable experiments in the relating of sound to sense.

Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?
But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted pine,
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
For Love is of the valley, come thou down
And find him; by the happy threshold, he,
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,

Or red with spirted purple of the vats,
Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk
With Death and Morning on the silver horns,
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
Nor find him dropp'd upon the firths of ice,
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors:
But follow; let the torrent dance thee down
To find him in the valley; let the wild
Lean-headed eagles yelp alone, and leave
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
That like a broken purpose waste in air:
So waste not thou; but come; for all the vales
Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth
Arise to thee; the children call, and I
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

With this bit of tonal landscape one may compare a notable passage in *Enoch Arden,* where, in four successive lines, as many aspects of tropical scenery are represented by the sound as well as by the pictorial significance of the phrasing. The whole context had better be quoted—for it is lyrical in mood and manner, even if in a narrative poem:

The mountain wooded to the peak, the lawns
And winding glades high up like ways to Heaven,
The slender coco's drooping crown of plumes,
The lightning flash of insect and of bird,
The lustre of the long convolvuluses
That coil'd around the stately stems, and ran

Ev'n to the limit of the land, the glows
And glories of the broad belt of the world,
All these he saw; but what he fain had seen
He could not see, the kindly human face,
Nor ever hear a kindly voice, but heard
The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl,
The league-long roller thundering on the reef,
The moving whisper of huge trees that branch'd
And blossom'd in the zenith, or the sweep
Of some precipitous rivulet to the wave,
As down the shore he ranged, or all day long
Sat often in the seaward-gazing gorge,
A shipwreck'd sailor, waiting for a sail:
No sail from day to day, but every day
The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts
Among the palms and ferns and precipices;
The blaze upon the waters to the east;
The blaze upon his island overhead;
The blaze upon the waters to the west;
Then the great stars that globed themselves in
heaven,
The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise—but no sail.

Then, in contrast to the gorgeous tropical scene, is set a memory of the English scene for which the exile would gladly have exchanged it:

the chill
November dawns and dewy-glooming downs,
The gentle shower, the smell of dying leaves,
And the low moan of leaden-colour'd seas.

Finally, from these complex orchestral effects let us turn to two brief lyrics with a simple melodic

utterance whose sound-quality suggests a solo on flute or oboe. The first is a poignant note of memory, written on Tennyson's revisiting, with his family, one of the scenes of his early wanderings with Arthur Hallam.

IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ

All along the valley, stream that flashest white,
Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,
All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty years ago.
All along the valley, while I walk'd to-day,
The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls away;
For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,
Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,
And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,
The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.

The other, made on a visit to the home of Catullus at Sirmione, is a reminiscence of the Roman poet's elegy on his dead brother; note the haunting single rhyme in *"o."*

"FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE"

Row us out from Desenzano, to your Sirmione row!
So they row'd, and there we landed—"O venusta Sirmio!"
There to me thro' all the groves of olive in the summer glow,
There beneath the Roman ruin where the purple flowers grow,
Came that "Ave atque Vale" of the Poet's hopeless woe,
Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen-hundred years ago,
"Frater Ave atque Vale"—as we wander'd to and fro,
Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the Garda Lake below,
Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-silvery Sirmio!

Such are some of the outstanding passages representing Tennyson's mastery of the tonal elements in lyrical form. But I have already suggested that it is not in these salient instances that the chief values of the art are found. The highest powers of a poet, like those of a composer, appear not at points which can be isolated for separate admiration, but in the steady persistence of harmonic effects which are inseparable from the significant purpose of the whole. So the finest lyrical art of Tennyson is not characterized by notable achievements in the use of vowels, or liquids, or imitative effects, but is to be sought in the unanalyzable completeness of such compositions as the "Sweet after showers" of *In Memoriam,* or "Crossing the Bar."

II. Lyrical Subject-Matter

We now turn to the other main aspect of Tennyson's lyrical work, its imaginative presentation of personal emotion. In a sense every lyric arises from a personal fact, as smoke does from a flame. If we are concerned with a poet's biography, and have the necessary information, we may distinguish between the facts which are real, in the sense that they actually had a place in his outward life, and those which were matters only of inward experience. In some cases, as the sonnets of Shakespeare and the "Lucy poems" of Wordsworth, we are unable to say what—if anything—was the material fact which gave rise to the spiritual one; in others, as

Milton's sonnets and Mrs. Browning's, we are well acquainted with it. Some poets sing primarily of their immediate personal world; others primarily of the world outside themselves. Tennyson's lyrical utterances represent both kinds with considerable richness. We have already seen how the experiences of his own life gave rise to such compositions as "The Daisy," "The Gleam," and "The Valley of Cauteretz." The same thing is true of a lyric more familiar than any of these,—one of the number of those centering in the poet's sorrow for the death of his friend Hallam:

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

But the chief example of this personal type is to be found in the lyrics of *In Memoriam*. The sig-

nificance of that work in respect to contemporary thought on matters of philosophy and religion we shall have to consider another time; for the present I want only to note that it is, in effect, a lyrical sequence—that is, a series of lyrics each of which is an independent composition, yet a link in a developed whole. An Elizabethan poet, or Rossetti among Tennyson's own contemporaries, would have made the several parts into sonnets, but Tennyson did not express himself freely in sonnet form. In the little lyrics of *In Memoriam,* most of them in finished and condensed, though not in fixed, form like the sonnet, he found that opportunity to give his personal grief a lasting expressive form which is the chief consolation of an artist. Some of the lyrics, of course, are so general as to be wholly valid for any speaker: the New Year song, "Ring out, Wild Bells," is a familiar example. Others are so purely personal—like the ninth and tenth, addressed to the ship that brought home to England the body of Arthur Hallam—as to have no meaning apart from the situation that gave them birth. The conclusion of the poem, in lines associating the writer's sorrow with the marriage of his sister Cecilia, is almost so intimately personal as to lead one to question its good taste. (If this be so, however, one should recall that Tennyson published *In Memoriam* anonymously, as if to avoid the semblance of exposing individual experiences too freely.) Such a problem of taste is not a matter for dogmatism;

the important thing is to note that for the lyrical poet, as for what we may call the subjective type of artist in general, there is a genuine joy and relief in giving his deepest feelings formal expression. Many of the greatest lyrics, of whatever age or language, are due to this. Some persons, on the other hand, make the mistake of associating formal beauty only with artificiality; for themselves they wish no pomp or ritual for the expression of the deepest experiences of life—they prefer to be married in street dress, and buried without music, because for them sincerity is primarily a matter of informality. All this is quite within their rights; but they are in danger of valuing unfairly the quality of temperaments of another kind, which crave formal beauty at wedding or funeral, with all that music or poetry can do for such great moments, because the very depth of their experience is such that they wish to link it with the finest utterances of the experience of the whole race. A lyric, then, may be one means of attaining this end; and we can all perceive how Tennyson, learning in his sorrow some of the laws of love, found relief in expressing them in lines which are of universal significance for those passing through similar experience:

> This truth came borne with bier and pall,
> I felt it, when I sorrowed most:
> 'Tis better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all.

So much for the lyrics which are literally per-

sonal. At the other extreme are those attributed to persons dramatically conceived, like the hero of *Maud*. In this work Tennyson was as completely objective as in *In Memoriam* he had been subjective. The starting-point of *Maud* was in a single dramatic lyric (it became the fourth of Part Two in the completed work), which imaged for a moment the personality of a distraught and forsaken lover:

> O that 'twere possible
> After long grief and pain
> To find the arms of my true love
> Round me once again! . . .
>
> Ah Christ, that it were possible
> For one short hour to see
> The souls we loved, that they might tell us
> What and where they be.

Developing this situation, with a series of events such as a poet of another type would have treated in a drama, Tennyson undertook to seize and fix the lyrical significance of each moment of the story, as we shall see more fully in another chapter.

The greater number of his lyrics, however, as is commonly the case, are neither conspicuously personal nor wholly objective,—neither autobiographic nor dramatic,—but represent that blend of individual and universal experience which is the typical point of birth for a work of art. The experiences treated by lyrical poetry are especially likely to be connected with the themes of Nature, Love, and Death. There are countless others, of course, but these three stand

out preëminent as stimuli to our deepest feelings, and consequently to poetic expression. It may be worth while, then, to use them as means to some further examination of Tennyson's lyrical art.

Like most of the great English poets, Tennyson lived in close touch with outdoor nature, and found it significant for his work; but it is a little harder than in some other cases to say just what it meant to him. He was not disposed, for example, like Wordsworth, to view it mystically or transcendentally—to find in it the voice

> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And in the mind of man.

Not that this was averse from his philosophy, for he confessed himself in part a pantheist, and was fond of speaking of the visible universe as the shadow of God. But his normal attitude toward it, as poet, was not philosophic. Neither did he value nature, like Shelley, chiefly as a voicing of his own personality; the sky-lark was not for him the utterance of his longing for unattainable beauty, nor the west wind a symbol of his restless passion to change and fructify the face of the earth. He did, however, like all the romantic poets, make much of the connection between personal moods and the "atmosphere" of the scenes in which they were set; the song on autumn melancholy, quoted near the beginning of the preceding chapter, shows how skilfully he could fall into Ruskin's "pathetic fallacy,"

in tracing this sort of connection. Sometimes one may trace a kinship between the luxuriant, graceful moodiness of his descriptions and that of the engravers and painters of the early Victorian period. But primarily he viewed nature with the simple joy and curiosity of an open-eyed child. One of his friends wrote, "However absorbed he might be in earnest talk, his eye and ear were always alive to the natural objects around him. I have often known him to stop short in a sentence to listen to a blackbird's song, to watch the sunlight glint on a butterfly's wing, or to examine a field flower at his feet." Another friend told a story, which Mr. Benson relates, of a country walk which the two were taking together, in which Tennyson stumbled over a stile and fell to the ground, close to a muddy little pool. Surprised that he did not at once pick himself up, his friend found him still bending over the pool, which was filled with minute animal and vegetable life, and saying solemnly, "What an imagination God Almighty has!" The typical product of this keen physical joy is his best-loved nature poem, where each detail of light and motion is preserved with the accuracy of a camera and the emphasis of a lover.

THE BROOK

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

In the second place, Tennyson viewed nature not merely with open-eyed simplicity of enjoyment, but as an artist; as a painter does, for instance, whom we catch viewing a scene with half-shut eye, or perhaps measuring it with his pencil to see how it might best be thrown into perspective. So the poet would jot down what his son calls "verse-memoranda" of his walking tours, like these:

"(Torquay.) As the little thrift
Trembles in perilous places o'er the deep."

"(Old Red Sandstone.) As a stony spring
Blocks its own issue (though it makes a fresh one of course)."

"(Fowey.) A cow drinking from a trough on the hillside. The netted beams of light played on the wrinkles of her throat."

"(Bonchurch.) A little salt pool fluttering round a stone upon the shore."

"(Isle of Wight.) As those that lie on happy shores and see
Thro' the near blossom slip the distant sail."

"(The river Shannon.) Ledges of battling water."

Some of these phrases, it will be noticed, are already fitted into an imagined rhythmical setting, and also into imagined similes. Wordsworth, in such a case, would have set down only the bare fact as he saw it. Tennyson valued it not only for itself but for its decorative possibilities.

One sees the results of this sort of note-taking in the little lyrical interludes or momentary embellishments, in the form of similes or otherwise, which the poet introduced even into narrative, in the manner of ancient epic verse. Thus the swelling muscle on the sleeping Geraint's arm is imaged in terms of the smooth surface of a tiny waterfall in a stream:

As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it.

Again, there is a glance as keen as when "careful robins eye the delver's toil," and a flower that trembles

as a thistle shakes
When three gray linnets wrangle for the seed.

Of the love of Psyche and Florian we read that it was no stranger

Than when two dewdrops on the petal shake
To the same sweet air, and tremble deeper down,
And slip at once all-fragrant into one.

At the opposite mood from these dainty bits of observation are the storm scenes; as when one

sees a great black cloud
Drag inward from the deeps, a wall of night,
Blot out the slope of sea from verge to shore,
And suck the blinding splendour from the sand,
And quenching lake by lake and tarn by tarn
Expunge the world;

or when there

comes a pillar of electric cloud,
Flaying the roofs and sucking up the drains,
And shadowing down the champaign till it strikes
On a wood, and takes, and breaks, and cracks, and splits,
And twists the grain with such a roar that Earth
Reels, and the herdsmen cry;

or, at length, when

> the storm, its burst of passion spent,
> Moaning and calling out of other lands,
> Had left the ravaged woodland yet once more
> To peace.

Most characteristic of all are the sea-sketches, brought in now for their special fitness to what the poet is telling, and again for sheer love of themselves. The sea was rarely altogether out of Tennyson's eye, and he knew every mood and glance of it as perhaps no other writer has done who was no great traveler. Sometimes it is a single rapid stroke, like that depicting a view of Bristol Channel in the words, "white sails flying on a yellow sea," or the marvelously vivid "lazy-plunging sea" of the nearer foreground. Sometimes there is a fuller picture:

> The curl'd white of the coming wave
> Glass'd in the slippery sand before it breaks;

> As the crest of some slow-arching wave,
> Heard in dead night along that table-shore,
> Drops flat, and after the great waters break
> Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves,
> Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud,
> From less and less to nothing;

> As on a dull day in an ocean cave
> The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall
> In silence.

It would be hard to find in the work of any other poet so rich a collection of these nature sketches as Tennyson has given us. And it was not only beauty, wrought for both eye and ear, that he sought in them: always he aimed at absolute truthfulness. Fidelity to the fact was as essential to his ideal as to that of a soundly trained painter. He was careful to explain that the "screaming" beach of *Maud* was an accurate rendering of the sound of withdrawing waves on a gravelly shore, and that when the heroine's feet had touched the meadows and left the daisies rosy, it was no lover's miracle, but the natural upturning of the tinted under side of the petals. Not only so, but he often seized upon the new scientific view of some natural phenomenon, as distinguished from that conventional in literature, perceiving its poetic value; thus a marriage song is made true to modern astronomy in its concept of the cosmic movement of the planet through the ether:

Move eastward, happy earth, and leave
  Yon orange sunset waning slow:
From fringes of the faded eve,
  O happy planet, eastward go;
Till over thy dark shoulder glow
  Thy silver sister-world, and rise
  To glass herself in dewy eyes
That watch me from the glen below.
Ah, bear me with thee, smoothly borne,
  Dip forward under starry light,
And move me to my marriage-morn,
  And round again to happy night.

In "The Palace of Art" Tennyson made the interesting experiment of presenting a series of nature studies as depicted by the art of tapestry—his poetry thus at the same time giving us a sense of the original scene and of the artist's special view of it. Each of these six is the complete impression of a single arras hanging:

One seem'd all dark and red—a tract of sand,
And some one pacing there alone,
Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
Lit with a low large moon.

One show'd an iron coast and angry waves.
You seem'd to hear them climb and fall
And roar rock-thwarted under bellowing caves,
Beneath the windy wall.

And one, a full-fed river winding slow
By herds upon an endless plain,
The ragged rims of thunder brooding low,
With shadow-streaks of rain.

And one, the reapers at their sultry toil.
In front they bound the sheaves. Behind
Were realms of upland, prodigal in oil,
And hoary to the wind.

And one a foreground black with stones and slags,
Beyond, a line of heights, and higher
All barr'd with long white cloud the scornful crags,
And highest, snow and fire.

And one, an English home—gray twilight pour'd
On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
A haunt of ancient peace.

In his later years, as is usually inevitable, the nature element in Tennyson's art diminished, as the intangible and spiritual elements of his imagination more and more overtopped the sensuous. Yet at the age of eighty he published this splendidly spontaneous little poem called

THE THROSTLE

"Summer is coming, summer is coming,
I know it, I know it, I know it.
Light again, leaf again, life again, love again."
Yes, my wild little Poet.

Sing the new year in under the blue.
Last year you sang it as gladly.
"New, new, new, new!" Is it then so new
That you should carol so madly?

"Love again, song again, nest again, young again,"
Never a prophet so crazy!
And hardly a daisy as yet, little friend;
See, there is hardly a daisy.

"Here again, here, here, here, happy year!"
O warble unchidden, unbidden!
Summer is coming, is coming, my dear,
And all the winters are hidden.

And in his very last volume (in "Akbar's Dream") was the great oriental Hymn to the Sun:

Once again thou flamest heavenward, once again we see thee rise.
Every morning is thy birthday gladdening human hearts and eyes.

Every morning here we greet it, bowing lowly down before thee,
Thee the godlike, thee the changeless in thine ever-changing skies.

Shadow-maker, shadow-slayer, arrowing light from clime to clime,
Hear thy myriad laureates hail thee monarch in their woodland rhyme.
Warble bird, and open flower, and, men, below the dome of azure
Kneel adoring Him the Timeless in the flame that measures Time!

When we turn to the next great theme of the lyric, we find Tennyson's lyrics of love to be relatively few, and on the whole lacking in ardency. It was a subject on which he thought much and deeply—perhaps that was the trouble, from the standpoint of poetry. Like Wordsworth, he seems not to have been himself an especially passionate lover, or to have been naturally disposed, even in hot youth, to voice that aspect of juvenility. If we glance at the group of maidens with lovely names who figure in his earliest poems,—Claribel, Lilian, Isabel, Adeline, Rosalind, Eleanore,—it is difficult to believe that he was as much concerned with themselves as with their possibilities for verse. And there is nowhere in his work anything comparable with the series of poems in which Browning developed his doctrine, at once passionate and transcendental, of love as the supreme good,—nothing like "Evelyn Hope" or "Christina" or "Love Among the Ruins" or "Their

Last Ride Together." Tennyson's typical love-lyric is such as one finds in the interludes of *The Princess* or the *Idylls of the King;* not so much an outburst of passion, either joyful or tragic, as a reverie—touched often, too, with a sense of the imperfection of the human heart. There is Vivien's, for instance, which once she heard the great Sir Lancelot sing:

> In Love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours,
> Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers:
> Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.
>
> It is the little rift within the lute,
> That by and by will make the music mute,
> And ever widening slowly silence all.
>
> The little rift within the lover's lute
> Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
> That rotting inward slowly moulders all.
>
> It is not worth the keeping: let it go:
> But shall it? answer, darling, answer, no.
> And trust me not at all or all in all.

Or that of Pelleas:

> A rose, but one, none other rose had I,
> A rose, one rose, and this was wondrous fair,
> One rose, a rose that gladden'd earth and sky,
> One rose, my rose, that sweeten'd all mine air—
> I cared not for the thorns; the thorns were there.
>
> One rose, a rose to gather by and by,
> One rose, a rose to gather and to wear,
> No rose but one—what other rose had I?
> One rose, my rose; a rose that will not die,—
> He dies who loves it,—if the worm be there.

The love-songs of *The Princess* are not touched by this sense of evil, but are nevertheless restrained and reflective. This one marks the final yielding of the Princess to a love which she feels will inevitably endanger her own personality:

Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea;
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the shape
With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape;
But O too fond, when have I answer'd thee?
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: what answer should I give?
I love not hollow cheek or faded eye:
Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!
Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live;
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are seal'd:
I strove against the stream and all in vain:
Let the great river take me to the main:
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;
Ask me no more.

This, to be sure, is almost completely happy:

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font:
The fire-fly wakens: waken thou with me.

Now droops the milkwhite peacock like a ghost,
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars,
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
And slips into the bosom of the lake:
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me.

But this one, again, sings of the tragedy of love in death:

Thy voice is heard thro' rolling drums,
That beat to battle where he stands;
Thy face across his fancy comes,
And gives the battle to his hands:
A moment, while the trumpets blow,
He sees his brood about thy knee;
The next, like fire he meets the foe,
And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

To all this characterization of Tennyson's love-lyrics, however, there is one great exception. All that the foregoing would seem to show that he was incapable of doing, he nevertheless did, once upon a time, when engaged in imagining the passion of a soul very different from his own; and in the poem which concludes the first part of *Maud* he wrote one of the great love-songs of the English tongue:*

Come into the garden, Maud,
For the black bat, night, has flown,
Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here at the gate alone;
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the rose is blown.

* For the situation and scene, see page 245.

For a breeze of morning moves,
And the planet of Love is on high,
Beginning to faint in the light that she loves
On a bed of daffodil sky,
To faint in the light of the sun she loves,
To faint in his light, and to die.

All night have the roses heard
The flute, violin, bassoon;
All night has the casement jessamine stirr'd
To the dancers dancing in tune;
Till a silence fell with the waking bird,
And a hush with the setting moon.

I said to the lily, "There is but one
With whom she has heart to be gay.
When will the dancers leave her alone?
She is weary of dance and play."
Now half to the setting moon are gone,
And half to the rising day;
Low on the sand and loud on the stone
The last wheel echoes away.

I said to the rose, "The brief night goes
In babble and revel and wine.
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those,
For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine," so I sware to the rose,
"For ever and ever, mine."

And the soul of the rose went into my blood,
As the music clash'd in the hall;
And long by the garden lake I stood,
For I heard your rivulet fall
From the lake to the meadow and on to the wood,
Our wood, that is dearer than all;

From the meadow your walks have left so sweet
That whenever a March-wind sighs
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes,
To the woody hollows in which we meet
And the valleys of Paradise.

The slender acacia would not shake
One long milk-bloom on the tree;
The white lake-blossom fell into the lake
As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
Knowing your promise to me;
The lilies and roses were all awake,
They sigh'd for the dawn and thee.

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
Come hither, the dances are done,
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
To the flowers, and be their sun.

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near;"
And the white rose weeps, "She is late;"
And the larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear;"
And the lily whispers, "I wait."

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed;

My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red.

The third great lyrical theme, that of death, was one which haunted Tennyson throughout his career. Though for the greater part of his life he was singularly free from the ravages of personal loss, the outstanding sorrow over the death of his best friend in his young manhood exerted a persistent influence, and the problem, "Does death end all?" teased the poet to the very end. We have already noted the effect of this on the development of the personal lyrics of *In Memoriam,* and in another chapter must consider further Tennyson's interpretations of the theme. Naturally, he was here most of all a reflective lyrist rather than a songster, and the speculative aspects of the subject were of such concern to him as to weight his treatment of it with certain didactic tendencies. He was quite incapable—morally incapable, I mean—of yielding himself to the purely moody or lyrical aspect of death, as Christina Rossetti (religious as her nature was) could do in the lines,

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me.

The close of the Wellington Ode approaches a nobly beautiful elegy—but it is reached only by the way of much history and much moralizing. It was reserved for Tennyson's old age to produce the two

brief and perfect lyrics on death which sum up his personal attitude, embodying his sublimated faith without the dross of argument. They stand close together at the end of his collected poems, and both were sung at his funeral in Westminster Abbey. The first of these poems, "The Silent Voices," curiously invites comparison with Browning's last poem on the same theme, the Epilogue to *Asolando,* published on the day of his death. In each case the writer voices his conception of individual life as essentially progressive; in each case the poet's personality rejects the idea of death as negation, and aspires confidently to activity without end. "On—strive on!" cries Browning. "On, and always on!" echoes Tennyson. The one addresses the friends he is to leave behind on earth, the other those who have gone before him.

THE SILENT VOICES

When the dumb Hour, clothed in black,
Brings the Dreams about my bed,
Call me not so often back,
Silent Voices of the dead,
Toward the lowland ways behind me,
And the sunlight that is gone!
Call me rather, silent voices,
Forward to the starry track
Glimmering up the heights beyond me
On, and always on!

The other poem is Tennyson's masterpiece. While not possessed of the captivating virility of Brown-

ing's utterances on the same theme, it is such a poem as only its writer, of all the men of his century, was destined to produce, in its fusion of flawless form, imaginative vividness, and moral elevation. Speculation and didactic labor for once laid by, he breathed forth all that they had done for him, and more, in a pure lyrical allegory, in which every word has its double meaning, substance and shadow, each contributing to and taking nothing from the other:

CROSSING THE BAR

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have cross'd the bar.

III

ARTHURIAN EPIC

EPIC poetry, as every one knows, from having been in earlier times the most exalted and representative type of literature, has become the least of all the traditional forms. There are various possible reasons for this, such as the development of modern prose fiction, and the diminished importance of heroic individuals in relation to national life; but the only one which I need emphasize here is the increasing importance of the subjective or spiritual element characteristic of modern civilization. The fact that a person is able to slay more of his foes with his good right arm than any one else in the community, which was the outstanding fact about an Homeric hero, still interests boys, and a few boy-like persons who never grow up, but it does not hold the interest of most of us for any considerable time. It is the souls, the motives, the inner struggles of men, which now concern us chiefly. Hence the objective literary types diminish in importance, and when they are used they are likely to be changed in character, especially by being more or less spiritualized. Of this Tennyson's epic poetry is a striking example.

Another difficulty with epic poetry in England has

been the want of a single great national hero, about whom a mass of story material had gathered, as with Æneas, Charlemagne, or the Cid. There were a few possibilities of this kind, such as Alfred the Great, Richard the Lion-hearted, and Henry Fifth, about all of whose names there grew up something like a national legend, sometimes used in balladry and romance; but none of them came to be lifted into really epic significance. What happened in the end was curious enough. Out of early British England, and from the days before the English race came to the land, there had arisen a saga which acquired a curious power of attracting to itself other elements of epic story from many different sources, of adapting itself to the needs of many of the races of western Europe, and of becoming at length the chief heroic legend of modern literature. This, of course, is the story of King Arthur. How it arose and grew has become the subject of many books, and can not even be outlined here. But in order to understand Tennyson's use of it, we need to recall certain things. In the first place, that the story is not really English, but Celtic, and is touched by the "Celtic magic," as men sometimes call that touch of romantic wonder—often with a touch of symbolic mysticism—which the Celt has above all the other Indo-European races. This might be said to be the great revenge of that race upon the English who conquered it,—who drove it into the fastnesses of Scotland and Wales, to Ireland and to the Western islands,—that its conquerors should have adopted as

their own hero, their hero of art and of the soul, a Celtic chieftain who *may* have fought with success against the West Saxons in the year 520, but whose cause was doomed to early defeat. In the second place, we must recall—what I have already suggested—that the story of Arthur took on something of the nature of an organism, a complex growing thing of life. One may sometimes see through the microscope mysterious elemental creatures, groups of protoplasmic cells, which draw others to themselves, unite with them to form one organism where before there were two or three, or again subdivide to form many where there was one. Like this, in a sense, is the history of the Arthurian saga.

Once more, we must remember that the story was transmitted through a number of different agencies, going back to sources in both Welsh and continental regions, and exhibiting corresponding differences of detail. For Great Britain the most influential single source was the version made in Latin by old Geoffrey of Monmouth, in the first half of the twelfth century, which was later paraphrased in both French and English versions of wide-spread importance. At length Sir Thomas Malory, about the year 1470, made his new romance, called the *Morte Arthur,* which again brought together materials from many different origins, became a new store-house of romance for modern England, and is incomparably the finest piece of English writing of its age. These two writers, Geoffrey and Malory, Tennyson refers to in his Epilogue to the Queen,

in which he speaks of *their* King Arthur as morally unsatisfying, compared with the ideal king that he has undertaken to depict. The Arthur "of Geoffrey's book" or "of Malleor's" was

> Touch'd by the adulterous finger of a time
> That hover'd between war and wantonness,
> And crownings and dethronements.

Tennyson's Arthur was to represent the spirit of a new age. But this is to anticipate what we shall have to notice later as to the transformation of the old saga. It must now be observed that there is still another source for Tennyson's story of which he himself does not speak, but of which it is certain he made important use. This is the collection of Welsh tales called *Mabinogion,* which Lady Charlotte Guest translated into English at the very time when Tennyson was making his early studies in the Arthurian material. It furnished versions of some of the material in the *Idylls of the King,* different from any that had been made known to modern readers.

We should also notice that the Arthurian "cycle," as it is often called, is divisible into lesser cycles, or groups of story material, some of which doubtless had no original connection with the story of Arthur. The most important of these cycles are familiar everywhere through their varied appearances in modern art. Most romantic of them all, in a sense, is the cycle of Tristram and Iseult, now best known through Wagner's version of it in music-

drama,—a great organism, with a distinct life of its own, both in earlier times and ours. Then there are the Lancelot cycle, resembling that of Tristram in treating of guilty love; the Sir Gawain cycle, less passionate but full of rich adventurous lore; the Merlin cycle, rather more intimately connected with the Arthur story than most of the others; and, at the opposite extreme of disconnection, the cycle of the Holy Grail. The way in which the last of these stories has come to be associated, both in Tennyson's work and elsewhere, with that of the great king and his knights of the Round Table, is extremely significant. It is not only a matter of accidental literary combination, but of the blending of a mere romantic story with a spiritual allegory, such as marks the whole course of the development of the old material in Tennyson's hands. The original Arthur was a barbaric chieftain, and the original story of his deeds was doubtless unconnected with any other ideals than those common to heroes of the chase, the camp, and the battle-field. But into it, as we have seen, grew other elements. One of these elements was the chivalric ideal, drawn not from British sources, but from social conditions on the Continent in medieval times. Another was the lore of the Christian church, fused now with Latin scholasticism, now with Germanic ideas of domestic morality, now with Celtic mysticism and romance. To this last compound, one might say, belongs the story of the Grail,—the cup of the Last Supper,—which unites a pagan tale of adventure with Christian sym-

bolism of the most sacred character, and which has adapted itself to the most divergent expressions of modern religious feeling, Catholic, Protestant, and neutral.

Tennyson began very early to make explorations into this field. "The vision of Arthur as I have drawn him," he wrote, "came upon me when, little more than a boy, I first lighted upon Malory." Sometimes it was the mere romantic atmosphere of the story that chiefly impressed him; this he never succeeded in reproducing quite so well as in the early fragment-poem, "Morte d'Arthur," which was enlarged to form the conclusion to the *Idylls*. Then, as he brooded over the material, its symbolic and ethical significance more and more interested him, so that—as some at least would say—the poetic story suffered as a result. One can study the beginnings of this symbolism in "The Lady of Shalott," written ten years before the "Morte d'Arthur," and taken from an Italian romance quite independent of the usual Arthurian sources. In itself this is a narrative existing only for beauty's sake, as we have seen in noting its style in the preceding chapter; but Tennyson was not content to leave it so: the mirror of the maiden, and the change that came into her life with love, are treated with a mystic touch which anticipates some of the method of the *Idylls*, though it is free from their ethical seriousness. The poet himself said that the clue to the symbolism was to be found in the closing lines of Part Two; "the new-born love for something,

for some one in the wide world from which she has been so long excluded, takes her out of the region of shadows into that of realities." Long afterward Tennyson developed anew the same theme, but with other relations and different emphasis, in the Idyll of "Lancelot and Elaine."

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

PART I

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
Skimming down to Camelot:

But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."

PART II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear,
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot.
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
"I am half sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:

And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra," by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.

For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott."

When we come to the *Idylls of the King,* we discover in the first place that we have to do not with one poem, as an epic is one, but with twelve poems; and the plural form of the title was intended to be significant in this respect. That is, each Idyll may be read by itself as an independent narrative, and most of the members of the series were actually published in an order quite different from that in which

they stand in the finished work;* yet they all radiate from the same central situation and conception—that of Arthur striving to build up a knighthood and a kingdom, and opposed by the evil forces of the world—and in their final form present something like a continuous story. It is a little as if we should find a series of different gardens in a park, each of which was capable of being enjoyed as a piece of separate planting, with its own colors and designs; yet, on reaching a proper point of observation, should find ourselves able to look through the whole series in perspective, and to perceive that all the gardens were designed about the same axis. In such a park it would be quite legitimate to take pleasure in the colors and patterns of the individual gardens, or to find one's chief pleasure in the relation which each bore to the whole design. And so it is with readers of the *Idylls of the King.*

If it is to the whole design that we look, we shall see that, though the material and the manner of telling are in good part epic, the work turns out not to be a typical epic after all. In one sense it is rather a tragedy, developing a truly tragic plot. But beyond that it proves not to be so much a story plot of any type whatsoever as the evolution of a spiritual theme. In the epilogue Tennyson tells us this,

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* This original order was as follows: "Enid" (including what now forms two Idylls, the third and fourth poems of the series), "Vivien," "Elaine," and "Guinevere," in 1859; "The Coming of Arthur," "The Holy Grail," "Pelleas and Etarre," and "The Passing of Arthur," in 1870; "Gareth and Lynette" and "The Last Tournament," in 1872; "Balin and Balan," in 1885.

indeed, bidding us not to look at the narrative primarily as that of the traditional Arthur and his wars

> ("that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
> Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak,
> And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still"),

but as one "shadowing Sense at war with Soul." Does this mean that we are to read the whole work as an allegory? For it is characteristic of allegory that the characters of its story cast shadows, and that the shadows are its real theme rather than the forms and deeds of the men themselves. To those of us who, being true moderns, are disposed to be impatient with this method, and to enjoy best actual men and their deeds, the question may be disconcerting. There is no doubt that, at one time and another, the allegorical element was very prominent in Tennyson's thought. His son has preserved a manuscript sketch for an Arthurian composition, probably dating as far back as 1833, in which there are notes like these: "K. A[rthur] Religious Faith;" "two Guineveres, the first primitive Christianity, second Roman Catholicism;" "Modred the sceptical understanding;" "Excalibur war." But this, of course, was not what he actually worked out. Of the *Idylls* he said, "I intended to represent Arthur as the Ideal of the Soul of Man coming in contact with the warring elements of the flesh." Yet in another note he admonishes, "Let not my readers press too hardly on details, whether for history or allegory." And it seems very clear that in at least

some of the Idylls he is not thinking of allegory at all, but of genuine epic narrative—always, to be sure, with the possibility of symbolic touches here and there. To recur to the analogy I suggested, of a form and its shadow, we may say that in these poems the shadow is sometimes of more importance than the form, while at other times the two have equal value, and very often the shadow is discerned only faintly.

For example of this, take the story of young Gareth winning his spurs in going against the giants who were enthralling the sister of Lynette. He is a thoroughly human youth, to all appearances, and certainly Lynette is a thoroughly human girl; the action, moreover, is for the most part in this present world of flesh and blood and good humor and bad. Yet at certain points the fact is stressed that the evil giant-knights bear the names of Daystar, Noon, Evening, and Night, so that the reader becomes aware—rather against his will, perhaps—that in one aspect Gareth is a type of knightly youth going forth to meet the temptations and dangers of the different ages of life, and finally of death. For one who has braved truly the perils of morning, noon, and sunset, the grim figure called Night and Death proves to be only illusion—

> As being after all their foolish fears
> And horrors only proven a blooming boy.

But of course this does not mean that everything in the poem is allegory, or can possibly be so inter-

preted. And when it comes to the effort to think always of Arthur as the Soul, Guinevere as the Affections or the Senses, and Merlin as the Intellect, as some critics would have us do, most of us will beg to be excused.

The gravest difficulty concerning this twofold character of the *Idylls* is found in the character of King Arthur himself. It is essential that our interest in him should be that felt in a real hero of flesh and blood, fighting his way to victory by the still primitive means of physical prowess and sturdy steel. He is in love, too, in human fashion, and is to find the ultimate test of both himself and his kingdom in the treachery of others to this human love. In the original story all this is present; moreover, Arthur is there, at times, barbaric in wrath and violence, and he has once been guilty of unlawful love. "God has not made since Adam was, the man more perfect than Arthur," Tennyson quotes (in a note) from an old chronicler; yet the Arthur of the chroniclers yielded to an adulterous passion for Bellicent, and it was Modred, born of their union, who was the means of bringing his kingdom to ruin. Thus in the prevalent form of the old version the story of Arthur's reign is a kind of tragedy of nemesis; and so it might be rewritten, no doubt, for modern times. But Tennyson wholly rejects the element of Arthur's guilt; in his version the kingdom is really wrecked by Lancelot, not by Modred, —by a guilty passion having no connection with any fault of the king's. More than this, Arthur is

everywhere the "blameless king," walking through this evil world unsullied by its ways, and hence fit to be the type or symbol of the divine aspect of the soul. To so present him without inconsistency, and without some irritation of the reader, was a really super-human task, and it would be idle to pretend that Tennyson was wholly successful in it. No writer has ever sought to portray a blameless hero without stirring up certain human antipathies—call them original sin, or what you will—to some resentment of his blamelessness; and many a reader of the *Idylls* has echoed the weary scorn of Guinevere's allusion to "the faultless king, that passionate perfection, my good lord." Even where belief in perfect innocence is justified by the doctrine of divine incarnation this difficulty has proved a stumbling-block; for the art of Christendom, in both painting and literature, has striven in vain to present the image of a Christ at the same time virile and faultless. If, then, Tennyson at all attains his end, —if he does not utterly fail in awakening our love and reverence for his ideal hero,—we may regard his skill as admirable. To the difficulty I have been speaking of there is also added another, namely, that the conception of ideal manhood changes from generation to generation, and has already undergone some vicissitudes even in the short time between the Victorian era and our own. Of this there will be more to say hereafter.

With these preliminary matters in mind, let us now look through the series of the *Idylls*. The

opening poem, "The Coming of Arthur," tells how the newly crowned king was summoned to Cameliard to clear the lands of King Leodogran of ravaging men and beasts. And Guinevere, Leodogran's daughter,

> Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass;
> But since he neither wore on helm or shield
> The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
> But rode a simple knight among his knights,
> And many of these in richer arms than he,
> She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she saw,
> One among many, tho' his face was bare.
> But Arthur, looking downward as he pass'd,
> Felt the light of her eyes into his life
> Smite on the sudden;

and later, on his way homeward to crush the enemies who had taken advantage of his absence, he reflected:

> "Saving I be joined
> To her that is the fairest under heaven,
> I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
> And cannot will my will, nor work my work
> Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
> Victor and lord. But were I join'd with her,
> Then might we live together as one life,
> And, reigning with one will in everything,
> Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
> And power on this dead world to make it live."

Therefore, after his victory, he sends three of his knights to Leodogran to ask Guinevere to wife. Leodogran's only hesitation is because of certain ru-

mored mysteries concerning the birth of Arthur; is he really of princely blood? In response to his inquiries two versions of the story come to him. The first relates that Arthur is the son of the late King Uther Pendragon, borne to him by Ygerne, and that he was delivered into the keeping of Merlin "until his hour should come;" the other that, on the night of Uther's death, Merlin had

> Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
> It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape thereof
> A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern
> Bright with a shining people on the decks,
> And gone as soon as seen.

Then Merlin and his companion watched by the sea, seeing

> Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,
> Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep
> And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
> Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:
> And down the wave and in the flame was borne
> A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
> Who stoop'd and caught the babe, and cried "The King!
> Here is an heir for Uther!" And the fringe
> Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,
> Lashed at the wizard as he spake the word,
> And all at once all round him rose in fire,
> So that the child and he were clothed in fire.
> And presently thereafter followed calm,
> Free sky and stars.

It was also related that Merlin used to swear, concerning Arthur,

Tho' men may wound him that he will not die,
But pass, again to come; and then or now
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
Till these and all men hail him for their king.

Leodogran is still hesitant; but his doubts are finally resolved by a dream, wherein he sees the king, first as a warring phantom, then as a crowned victor standing out in the heaven. And he sends "back to the court of Arthur answering yea." So Arthur despatched his best-loved knight, Sir Lancelot, to bring the queen:

And Lancelot passed away among the flowers
(For then was latter April), and returned
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.

And on their marriage day, while the pageant "paced a city all on fire with sun and cloth of gold," the king's knights sang this song before him:

"Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May;
Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd away!
Blow thro' the living world—'Let the King reign.'

"Shall Rome or Heathen rule in Arthur's realm?
Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon helm,
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

"Strike for the King and live! his knights have heard
That God hath told the King a secret word.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

"Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust.
Blow trumpet! live the strength and die the lust!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

"Strike for the King and die! and if thou diest,
The King is King, and ever wills the highest.
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

"Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May!
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

"The King will follow Christ, and we the King
In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign."

The second poem (which is really the first Idyll, since "The Coming of Arthur" is a kind of prologue) has already been discussed in brief—the story of Gareth and Lynette. It is youth's idyll, coming from the happy prime of Arthur's reign, when the kingdom has been established, the Round Table is at its best, and Camelot is the home of justice and righteousness. If we are reading not for the immediate story, but for the relation which the poem bears to the whole work, we are likely to be most interested in the picture of the royal city and of Arthur's court, as seen by the young Gareth on his first arrival.

At times the summit of the high city flash'd;
At times the spires and turrets half-way down
Prick'd through the mist; at times the great gate shone
Only, that open'd on the field below.

At the gate they came upon the mystical sculptures, of which the chief was that of the Lady of the Lake,

Arthur's teacher in infancy; and here the allegorical shadow looms large for the moment, since the Lady's image is understood to typify the Christian Church. Presently Merlin the sage, meeting the youth, half playfully warns him against drawing near to the king:

> "For, so thou pass
> Beneath this archway, then wilt thou become
> A thrall to his enchantments, for the king
> Will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame
> A man should not be bound by, yet the which
> No man can keep."

Undeterred, however, Gareth passes on to the royal hall, "the mighty hall that Merlin built." And here we may claim the privilege of anticipating the description of this hall from a later Idyll (though one earlier published), "The Holy Grail":

> And four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt
> With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:
> And in the lowest, beasts are slaying men,
> And in the second men are slaying beasts,
> And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
> And on the fourth are men with growing wings,
> And over all one statue in the mould
> Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
> And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern Star.

Inside one sees

> twelve great windows blazon Arthur's wars,
> And all the light that falls upon the board
> Streams thro' the twelve great battles of our king.
> Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,

> Wealthy with wandering lines of mount and mere,
> Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur.
> And also one to the west, and counter to it,
> And blank: and who shall blazon it? when and how?—
> O there, perchance, when all our wars are done,
> The brand Excalibur will be cast away.

Here Gareth beholds the king giving judgment and sending forth knights to avenge the wrongs of which any bring complaint. After which he offers himself, in accordance with his mother's plan, to serve a twelvemonth among the kitchen knaves, engaging in

> All kind of service with a noble ease
> That graced the lowliest act in doing it.

The rest of the Idyll tells the tale of his adventure against the four giant-knights against whom Lynette has summoned aid.

The third and fourth poems, called "The Marriage of Geraint" and "Geraint and Enid," are really one, and were originally published as one, though it afterward seemed best to Tennyson to make a distinct Idyll of the episode of the tournament in which Geraint won his bride by overthrowing the wicked Sir Edyrn. The main story is a variation of a familiar medieval theme, sometimes called the Griselda motif—a tested wife nobly patient under mistreatment, and so winning a double portion of her husband's love. This type of woman, immortalized by Chaucer in "The Clerk's Tale," is one peculiarly foreign to modern thinking; read-

ers of our time find difficulty not only in conceiving how a knightly husband could submit the woman he loved to the insults and injuries which a Griselda or an Enid bore so meekly, but also in keeping their patience with the patient victim. But to feel thus, of course, is to fail to put one's self back into the Middle Age. If we once assume or admit the type, —that meek and obedient womanhood toward which no modern maid aspires,—Enid is one of the loveliest of its representatives, from the time when her voice came to Geraint's ear as she sang in her father's hall,

> And made him like a man abroad at morn
> When first the liquid note beloved of men
> Comes flying over many a windy wave
> To Britain, and in April suddenly
> Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green and red,

until the moment when, her husband lying wounded, she

> Suddenly came, and at his side all pale
> Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his arms,
> Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye
> Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,
> And, tearing off her veil of faded silk,
> Had bared her forehead to the blistering sun,
> And swath'd the hurt that drain'd her dear lord's life.

In certain respects, too, the story of Enid is made more tolerable than that of the medieval Griselda: the treatment which her husband gives her is due not to the mere wanton desire to test her fidelity,

but to genuine suspicion of it, and for this suspicion there has been a real cause, though not in any fault of hers. It is just here that the significance of the story for the whole series comes in. Geraint has lost his utter faith, as well as his knightly activity and single-heartedness, because of the guilty love of Lancelot and the queen.

> Tho' yet there lived no proof, nor yet was heard
> The world's loud whisper breaking into storm,
> Not less Geraint believed it.

Hence he had deserted the court,

> Forgetful of his promise to the king, . . .
> Forgetful of his glory and his name,
> Forgetful of his princedom and its cares,

and given himself up to a morbid devotion to his wife—a devotion less genuine and less trustful than when it was a part of his knightly service. The end of the story, to be sure, is wholly happy; we are still in the period when there are cures for wrong in Arthur's kingdom; and there are few lovelier passages in the *Idylls* than the lines describing the reconciliation.

> Then Geraint upon the horse
> Mounted, and reached a hand, and on his foot
> She set her own and climbed; he turn'd his face
> And kiss'd her climbing, and she cast her arms
> About him, and at once they rode away.
> And never yet, since high in Paradise
> O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
> Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind

> Than liv'd thro' her, who in that perilous hour
> Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,
> And felt him hers again: she did not weep,
> But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist
> Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
> Before the useful trouble of the rain.

So Geraint is restored also to Arthur's service and a knightly career; even the wicked Sir Edyrn is reclaimed to better ways. But the poison which wrought the mischief has not been destroyed.

In the fifth poem, "Balin and Balan," this poison is seen to be renewing its power. Sir Balin is a knight of naturally passionate temper, who has once rebelled against the restraints of Arthur's court but has been restored to loyalty and self-control, and, as earnest of his better days, has obtained the privilege of bearing as his device on his shield the crown royal of the queen. At length her love for Lancelot becomes known to him; and at the castle of King Pellam, Arthur's enemy, he finds the purity of the court at Camelot openly reviled. Here enters also the figure of Vivien, the enchantress, who seems for the most part to symbolize the spirit which delights to believe in evil and to increase the life and power of evil by that very belief. She is singing a song of the Fire of Heaven, which for her is that sensual desire that animates all living things:

> "Old priest, who mumble worship in your quire—
> Old monk and nun, ye scorn the world's desire,
> Yet in your frosty cells ye feel the fire! . . .

"The fire of Heaven is lord of all things good,
And starve not thou this fire within thy blood,
But follow Vivien thro' the fiery flood.
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell!"

Then, turning to her squire, "This fire of Heaven,
This old sun-worship, boy, will rise again,
And beat the Cross to earth, and break the king
And all his Table."

When Balin has listened to her, his faith and courage are completely dissolved.

His evil spirit upon him leap'd,
He ground his teeth together, sprang with a yell,
Tore from the branch, and cast on earth, the shield,
Drove his mail'd heel athwart the royal crown,
Stamp'd all into defacement, hurl'd it from him
Among the forest weeds, and curs'd the tale,
The told-of, and the teller.

Thus raging, he is met by his brother Balan in the forest, but is not recognized because without his shield, and in the duel that follows each of them is mortally wounded. Balan still believes in the queen, and dies with praise of her purity upon his lips; but one sees that he is happier thus dying than in knowing the truth.

The sixth poem, "Merlin and Vivien," is perhaps the least pleasing and least significant of the collection. The old legend, in Tennyson's sources, telling of the mage Merlin beguiled one day by his mistress and imprisoned in a hollow oak through a charm which he himself had taught her, is one of the most

intangible and irrelevant episodes of the saga, and it is a fair question whether it might not better have been passed by. This is not to deny that, as a little dramatic scene in itself, the Idyll contains some extremely clever workmanship. But the venerable Merlin's yielding to the wiles of the enchantress—who talks, in this poem, rather surprisingly like a decayed gentlewoman in a novel—is so strange and so disagreeable a spectacle that, to find it at all worth while, we should perceive its essential connection with the Arthurian story; and this connection is very slight. Yet the Idyll does play a part in the evolution of the whole work: this part is to emphasize again the growing corruption of the court at Camelot, and the still greater corruption of public faith in the virtue of the Round Table. Though Merlin still knows the knights to be

> All brave, and many generous, and some chaste,

Vivien shows that the slime of slander or suspicion has touched them all; even the king himself can not be called blameless now, since he apparently winks at the foulness by which he is surrounded. As for the old prophet-mage, his retirement to the woods of Broceliande, where he was ensnared, is itself due to "a great melancholy" that bodes ill for coming days:

> He walked with dreams and darkness, and he found
> A doom that ever pois'd itself to fall,
> An ever-moaning battle in the mist,
> World-war of dying flesh against the life,

Death in all life and lying in all love,
The meanest having power upon the highest,
And the high purpose broken by the worm.

In the seventh poem, "Lancelot and Elaine," we return at least to that which is to be loved for its own sake, whatever its significance in the whole. And this Idyll does in fact contain the heart of the story of Lancelot and Guinevere, revealing at once the proud and passionate love of the queen, seemingly wholly untouched by remorse, and the equally proud and passionate, but ever torn and consciously guilty, personality of the great knight. For the Elaine story, which had fascinated Tennyson in the continental version used in the early "Lady of Shalott," he now found his material made ready for him in the Malory version, with a perfection that left him less to do than commonly; and even in the ancient form of the tale the significant theme—the contrast between Lancelot's unholy love and the pure and natural one which *might have been*—was present. The love of the girl Elaine is a revelation to him, but no temptation; for, unfaithful though he is in duty to his king, Lancelot is no light-o'-love.

And peradventure had he seen her first
She might have made this and that other world
Another world for the sick man; but now
The shackles of an old love straitened him,
His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

As for Elaine herself, and her dying for love,

that also, like the meekness of Enid, is far removed from the twentieth century; so again it must be recalled that Tennyson follows close to his original. If the sentiment of the poem, moreover, seems a bit too luscious, or too much made for tears, it is not the now belied Victorianism with which we have to do, but the romance of an age when love was for maidenhood the essence of life. This is Elaine's dying letter in Malory's version:

"Most noble knight, my lord Sir Launcelot du Lake, now hath death made us two debate for your love: I was your lover, that men called the fair maiden of Astolat: therefore unto all ladies I make my moan: yet for my soul that ye pray, and bury me at the least, and offer ye my mass-penny. This is my last request: and a clean maid I died, I take God to my witness. Pray for my soul, Sir Launcelot, as thou art a knight peerless."

Which the poet follows almost *verbatim.* But let us read the whole story of the burial, beginning at the point where Elaine's brother has written the letter at her dictation:

Which being writ
And folded, "O sweet father, tender and true,
Deny me not," she said—"ye never yet
Denied my fancies—this, however strange,
My latest: lay the letter in my hand
A little ere I die, and close the hand
Upon it; I shall guard it even in death.
And when the heat is gone from out my heart,
Then take the little bed on which I died
For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's

For richness, and me also like the Queen
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
To take me to the river, and a barge
Be ready on the river, clothed in black.
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.
There surely I shall speak for mine own self,
And none of you can speak for me so well.
And therefore let our dumb old man alone
Go with me, he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the doors."

She ceased: her father promised; whereupon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.
But ten slow mornings pass'd, and on the eleventh
Her father laid the letter in her hand,
And closed the hand upon it, and she died.
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Pass'd like a shadow thro' the field, that shone
Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her
"Sister, farewell for ever," and again
"Farewell, sweet sister," parted all in tears.

Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,
Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood—
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

Then the scene changes to Camelot, where Lancelot has offered his nine-years-fought-for diamonds to the queen, and she has rejected them for her jealousy.

Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half disdain
At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,
Close underneath his eyes, and right across
Where these had fallen, slowly passed the barge
Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst away
To weep and wail in secret; and the barge,
On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.
There two stood arm'd, and kept the door; to whom,
All up the marble stair, tier over tier,
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes that ask'd
"What is it?" but that oarsman's haggard face,
As hard and still as is the face that men
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken rocks
On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and they said,
"He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,
Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen, so fair!

Yea, but how pale! what are they? flesh and blood?
Or come to take the King to Fairyland?
For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,
But that he passes into Fairyland."

While thus they babbled of the King, the King
Came girt with knights: then turn'd the tongueless man
From the half-face to the full eye, and rose
And pointed to the damsel, and the doors.
So Arthur bade the meek Sir Percivale
And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid;
And reverently they bore her into hall.
Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,
And Lancelot later came and mused at her,
And last the Queen herself, and pitied her:
But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
Stoop'd, took, brake seal, and read it; this was all:

"Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
I loved you, and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my death.
And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,
And to all other ladies, I make moan:
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
As thou art a knight peerless."

Thus he read;
And ever in the reading, lords and dames
Wept, looking often from his face who read
To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
So touch'd were they, half-thinking that her lips,
Who had devised the letter, moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all:
"My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,
Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
Right heavy am I; for good she was and true,
But loved me with a love beyond all love
In women, whomsoever I have known.
Yet to be loved makes not to love again;
Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
No cause, not willingly, for such a love:
To this I call my friends in testimony,
Her brethren, and her father, who himself
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
To break her passion, some discourtesy
Against my nature: what I could, I did.
I left her and I bade her no farewell;
Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would have died,
I might have put my wits to some rough use,
And help'd her from herself."

Then said the Queen
(Sea was her wrath, yet working after storm),
"Ye might at least have done her so much grace,
Fair lord, as would have help'd her from her death."
He raised his head, their eyes met and hers fell,
He adding,

"Queen, she would not be content
Save that I wedded her, which could not be.
Then might she follow me thro' the world, she ask'd;
It could not be. I told her that her love
Was but the flash of youth, would darken down
To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
Toward one more worthy of her—then would I,
More specially were he, she wedded, poor,
Estate them with large land and territory
In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,

To keep them in all joyance: more than this
I could not; this she would not, and she died."

He pausing, Arthur answer'd, "O my knight,
It will be to thy worship, as my knight,
And mine, as head of all our Table Round,
To see that she be buried worshipfully."

So toward that shrine which then in all the realm
Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went
The marshall'd Order of their Table Round,
And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
And mass, and rolling music, like a queen.
And when the knights had laid her comely head
Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
Then Arthur spake among them, "Let her tomb
Be costly, and her image thereupon,
And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet
Be carven, and her lily in her hand.
And let the story of her dolorous voyage
For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb
In letters gold and azure!"

As this Idyll of Elaine is especially close to the sources, the following one, "The Holy Grail," is of all the series the most completely Tennyson's, being not only newly wrought in respect to the principal incidents, but with its theme curiously altered or reversed from the medieval significance. Across the old fabric of the Arthurian story, as we have seen, there had been traced at one point or another the mystic Christian legend of the Grail, symbolic of the highest hopes of the spirit. Now these aspira-

tions, in accordance with the ecclesiasticism of the Middle Age, were inevitably connected with asceticism,—with withdrawal from the world and the normal human ties. Tennyson, on the other hand, was a sturdy Protestant; one might say that he was a mystic without being a sacramentarian, and *his* Kingdom of Heaven was based on piety, but on piety in the activities of human society,—on chastity, but on the chastity not of celibacy but of marriage. Hence he emphasizes not so much the spiritual values of the search for the Holy Grail, with the corresponding abandonment of knightly pursuits and the sanctification of the personal life, as the fact that this movement was a step in the decay and dissolution of the Round Table. For this he found a cue in the passage in Malory where Arthur's sorrow over the scattering of his knights is portrayed:

"Alas!" said King Arthur unto Sir Gawain, "ye have nigh slain me with the vow and promise that ye have made; for through you ye have bereft me of the fairest fellowship and the truest of knighthood that ever were seen together in any realm of the world. For when they shall depart from hence, I am sure that all shall never meet more in this world, for there shall many die in the quest." . . . And therewith tears fell into his eyes.

The idea that the quest for the Grail is foreign to the main purposes of the Christian life is not treated by Tennyson in the simple manner which we might expect,—the manner of Lowell, for example, in *Sir Launfal,* where the spiritual end is rep-

resented as being attained by the transfer of energy from mystic strivings to humanitarian acts. In Tennyson's thought there is still room for the devotee; "to few only," he wrote in a note on the poem, "is given the spiritual enthusiasm. Those who have it not ought not to affect it." It is a little difficult, then, to make the implications of his "Holy Grail" altogether consistent; perhaps one might say that he would allow for the individual ascetic, but not for the monastic institution. At any rate he develops his view by blending three or four different accounts of the search for the Grail, as associated with different heroes. There are both Galahad and Percivale (the Parsifal of the Germanic story), true mystics, who differ in that the one is endowed with perfect unworldly purity by nature, while the other can attain it only through striving. There is Lancelot, for whom the Grail is a blinding terror —when the vision is momentarily achieved—because of his sin. There is Sir Bors, whose quest is more to help his fellow knight than to gain the vision for himself, and to whom it is granted as a swift consolation when he himself has lost the thought of it, imprisoned in a foreign land. And apart from all there is the king himself, who must stick to his daily task like a hind to the plow, who never goes on the Quest, but who has his own visions, greater and more real than any of the Grail.

Arthur was absent from Camelot on the great day on which Galahad dared to take his place in the Siege Perilous—

> And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
> A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
> And rending, and a blast, and overhead
> Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
> And in the blast there smote along the hall
> A beam of light seven times more clear than day:
> And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
> All over covered with a luminous cloud,
> And none might see who bare it, and it passed.

This it is that stirs the whole Round Table to vow devotion to the Quest, and when the king returns he learns of the disrupting excitement.

> "Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the king, "for such
> As thou art is the vision, not for these. . . .
> Go, since your vows are sacred, being made:
> Yet—for ye know the cries of all my realm
> Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my knights,
> Your places being vacant at my side,
> This chance of noble deeds will come and go
> Unchalleng'd, while ye follow wandering fires."

So the devotees set forth. The heart of the story of their adventures is found in those of Percivale, who himself tells the tale, rising to one of the supreme heights of the verse of the *Idylls* when he comes to narrate the assumption of Galahad—how he is swept by his spiritual vision into the heavenly city, forever withdrawn from the soilure of earth. But first Percivale passes through a number of symbolic experiences: he makes test of sensual love, of domestic happiness, of wealth, and of fame.

And on I rode, and when I thought my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then a brook,
With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white
Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave,
And took both ear and eye; and o'er the brook
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns. "I will rest here,"
I said, "I am not worthy of the Quest;"
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns.

And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning; and fair the house whereby she sat,
And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious; and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say,
"Rest here;" but when I touch'd her, lo! she, too,
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

And on I rode, and greater was my thirst.
Then flash'd a yellow gleam across the world,
And where it smote the plowshare in the field,
The plowman left his plowing, and fell down
Before it; where it glitter'd on her pail,
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell down
Before it, and I knew not why, but thought
"The sun is rising," tho' the sun had risen.
Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armour with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels; and his horse
In golden armour jewell'd everywhere:
And on the splendour came, flashing me blind;

And seem'd to me the Lord of all the world,
Being so huge. But when I thought he meant
To crush me, moving on me, lo! he, too,
Open'd his arms to embrace me as he came,
And up I went and touch'd him, and he, too,
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And wearying in a land of sand and thorns.

And I rode on and found a mighty hill,
And on the top, a city wall'd: the spires
Prick'd with incredible pinnacles into heaven.
And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd; and these
Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Percivale!
Thou mightiest and thou purest among men!"
And glad was I and clomb, but found at top
No man, nor any voice. And thence I pass'd
Far thro' a ruinous city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there; but there I found
Only one man of an exceeding age.
"Where is that goodly company," said I,
"That so cried out upon me?" and he had
Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasp'd,
"Whence and what art thou?" and even as he spoke
Fell into dust, and disappear'd, and I
Was left alone once more, and cried in grief,
"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
And touch it, it will crumble into dust."

And thence I dropped into a lowly vale,
Low as the hill was high, and where the vale
Was lowest, found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,
To whom I told my phantoms, and he said:

"O son, thou hast not true humility,
The highest virtue, mother of them all;

For when the Lord of all things made Himself
Naked of glory for His mortal change,
'Take thou my robe,' she said, 'for all is thine,'
And all her form shone forth with sudden light
So that the angels were amazed, and she
Follow'd Him down, and like a flying star
Led on the gray-hair'd wisdom of the east;
But her thou hast not known: for what is this
Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins?
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad." When the hermit made an end,
In silver armour suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chapel door
Laid lance, and enter'd, and we knelt in prayer.
And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst,
And at the sacring of the mass I saw
The holy elements alone; but he,
"Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,
The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine:
I saw the fiery face as of a child
That smote itself into the bread, and went;
And hither am I come; and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
This Holy Thing, fail'd from my side, nor come
Cover'd, but moving with me night and day,
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode,
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,
And pass'd thro' Pagan realms, and made them mine,
And clash'd with Pagan hordes, and bore them down,
And broke thro' all, and in the strength of this
Come victor. But my time is hard at hand,
And hence I go; and one will crown me king

Far in the spiritual city; and come thou, too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go."

While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine,
Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew
One with him, to believe as he believed.
Then, when the day began to wane, we went.

There rose a hill that none but man could climb,
Scarr'd with a hundred wintry watercourses—
Storm at the top, and when we gain'd it, storm
Round us and death; for every moment glanced
His silver arms and gloom'd: so quick and thick
The lightnings here and there to left and right
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire: and at the base we found
On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
Part black, part whiten'd with the bones of men,
Not to be cross'd, save that some ancient king
Had built a way, where, link'd with many a bridge,
A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.
And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,
And every bridge as quickly as he cross'd
Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I yearn'd
To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens
Open'd and blazed with thunder such as seem'd
Shoutings of all the sons of God: and first
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
In silver-shining armour starry-clear;
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
If boat it were—I saw not whence it came.
And when the heavens open'd and blazed again

Roaring, I saw him like a silver star—
And had he set the sail, or had the boat
Become a living creature clad with wings?
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.
Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star
I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl—
No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints—
Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.
Then fell the floods of heaven drowning the deep.
And how my feet recross'd the deathful ridge
No memory in me lives; but that I touch'd
The chapel-doors at dawn I know; and thence
Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
Glad that no phantom vex'd me more, return'd
To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's wars.

We must listen also to Lancelot's story of his quest, the significance of which I have already suggested:

O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,
Slime of the ditch: but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
And poisonous grew together, each as each,

Not to be pluck'd asunder; and when thy knights
Sware, I sware with them only in the hope
That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
They might be pluck'd asunder. Then I spake
To one most holy saint, who wept and said,
That save they could be pluck'd asunder, all
My quest were but in vain; to whom I vow'd
That I would work according as he will'd.
And forth I went, and while I yearn'd and strove
To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
My madness came upon me as of old,
And whipp'd me into waste fields far away;
There was I beaten down by little men,
Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword
And shadow of my spear had been enow
To scare them from me once; and then I came
All in my folly to the naked shore,
Wide flats, where nothing but coarse grasses grew;
But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
Tho' heap'd in mounds and ridges all the sea
Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens
Were shaken with the motion and the sound.
And blackening in the sea-foam sway'd a boat,
Half-swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a chain;
And in my madness to myself I said,
"I will embark and I will lose myself,
And in the great sea wash away my sin."
I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.
Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
And with me drove the moon and all the stars;
And the wind fell, and on the seventh night
I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
And felt the boat shock earth, and looking up,

Behold, the enchanted towers of Carbonek,
A castle like a rock upon a rock,
With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
And steps that met the breaker! there was none
Stood near it but a lion on each side
That kept the entry, and the moon was full.
Then from the boat I leap'd, and up the stairs.
There drew my sword. With sudden-flaring manes
Those two great beasts rose upright like a man,
Each gripp'd a shoulder, and I stood between;
And, when I would have smitten them, heard a voice,
"Doubt not, go forward; if thou doubt, the beasts
Will tear thee piecemeal." Then with violence
The sword was dash'd from out my hand, and fell.
And up into the sounding hall I pass'd;
But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,
No bench nor table, painting on the wall
Or shield of knight; only the rounded moon
Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
But always in the quiet house I heard,
Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
To the eastward: up I climb'd a thousand steps
With pain: as in a dream I seem'd to climb
For ever: at the last I reach'd a door,
A light was in the crannies, and I heard,
"Glory and joy and honour to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail."
Then in my madness I essay'd the door:
It gave; and thro' a stormy glare, a heat
As from a seventimes-heated furnace, I,
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
With such a fierceness that I swoon'd away—
O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around

Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes.
And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
That which I saw; but what I saw was veil'd
And cover'd; and this Quest was not for me.

In conclusion we have the king's summary of the Quest; whose final lines Tennyson said were "intended to be the summing up of all in the highest note by the highest of men."

And spake I not too truly, O my knights?
Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
That most of them would follow wandering fires,
Lost in the quagmire?—lost to me and gone,
And left me gazing at a barren board,
And a lean Order—scarce return'd a tithe—
And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw;
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
Cares but to pass into the silent life.
And one hath had the vision face to face,
And now his chair desires him here in vain,
However they may crown him otherwhere.

And some among you held, that if the King
Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow:
Not easily, seeing that the King must guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind
To whom a space of land is given to plow.
Who may not wander from the allotted field
Before his work be done; but, being done,
Let visions of the night or of the day

Come, as they will; and many a time they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air
But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again: ye have seen what ye have seen.

In the ninth and tenth poems we come to tragedy, no longer merely hinted and forecast; the first of them, "Pelleas and Etarre," Tennyson himself calls "the breaking of the storm." In the main narrative it is only an episode, like that of Balin,—the terribly sad story of the ruin of a young man's love and faith. Sir Pelleas, at the dawn of manhood, in love with valor and with love, though not yet with any maiden, is captured by the loveliness of Etarre, whom he finds lost with her attendants in the wood; but she scorns his boy-like devotion, puts him to all manner of patient endurance of shameful treatment, and at length yields herself to an amour with Gawain, at the very moment when Gawain has given Pelleas hope of winning her favor. As Pelleas's passion has been directed more toward love and beauty personified than toward Etarre herself, so his disillusion is not so much personal disappointment as the corruption of his faith. "Fool, beast!" he rages, and adds, "He, she, or I? myself most fool." And the ideal chastity of the Round Table now seems turned to dust.

> "Love? we be all alike: only the king
> Hath made us fools and liars. O noble vows!
> O great and sane and simple race of brutes
> That own no lust because they have no law!
> For why should I have loved her to my shame? . . .
> I never loved her, I but lusted for her."

So he rides wildly into the night. But the worst blow still remains: when he cries, in the hearing of Percivale, "False! and I held thee pure as Guinevere," he is told for the first time of the sin of the queen; and again he rides wildly forth, crying:

> "I am wrath and shame and hate and evil fame,
> And like a poisonous wind I pass to blast
> And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the Queen."

He dares even attack Lancelot in the field, and, overthrown by him, speak fiercely to the queen in the great hall. Then, as he disappears finally into the dark, Guinevere

> Looked hard upon her lover, he on her,
> And each foresaw the dolorous day to be:
> And all talk died, as in a grove all song
> Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey;
> Then a long silence came upon the hall,
> And Modred thought, "The time is hard at hand."

The tenth poem, "The Last Tournament," brings the tragedy to its crisis. Even the king has at last perceived the decay of his knightly company. "Is mine the blame," he asks of Lancelot,

"that oft I seem as he
Of whom was written, 'A sound is in his ears'?
The foot that loiters, bidden go,—the glance
That only seems half-loyal to command,—
A manner somewhat fall'n from reverence,—
Or have I dreamed the bearing of our knights
Tells of a manhood ever less and lower?
Or whence the fear lest this my realm, uprear'd
By noble deeds at one with noble vows
From flat confusion and brute violences,
Reel back into the beast, and be no more?"

He himself rides away on one more errand against the heathen, leaving Lancelot to preside at the last tournament—which is mockingly called the Tournament of the Dead Innocence. It is autumn now, as it was spring when Arthur won his throne and his bride:

And ever the wind blew, and yellowing leaf
And gloom and gleam and shower and shorn plume
Went down it;

and the knights fight not valiantly as of old, so that one and another cry, "The glory of our Round Table is no more."

Then fell thick rain, plume drooped and mantle clung,
And pettish cries awoke, and the wan day
Went glooming down in wet and weariness.

It is an awful scene, and portrayed with marvelous depth and unity of tone. But the chief significance of all is in the fact that it is Tristram who wins

the tournament prize,—Tristram, most blithesomely false of lovers, who, like Lancelot, has stolen a queen's heart from her lord, but, unlike Lancelot, is untrue even to her, and withal is merry and conscienceless. To modern readers for whom the loves of Tristram and Iseult have been made tragically beautiful by Wagner and Swinburne and many another poet, it is a melancholy use of the great colorful saga of passion—this introduction of it here as a mere pendant to the story of the decay of Arthur's kingdom, a sordid detail in a gray scene. Perhaps Tennyson would not have used it so (he has been reproached for it) if, when this Idyll was written, he had realized the place that the Tristram theme would take in the later nineteenth century; or perhaps on the other hand he would have sturdily maintained his treatment of guilty love as essentially a responsible and an ignoble thing, in contrast with the helpless fated loveliness of its appearance in Wagner and the others. His Tristram's song is not of the will-less consciousness of the destiny "to desire and die," as it is breathed out in the last words of the operatic hero, but of wilful errantry and unfaith:

> Free love—free field—we love but while we may:
> The woods are hush'd, their music is no more:
> The leaf is dead, the yearning pass'd away:
> New leaf, new life—the days of frost are o'er:
> New life, new love, to suit the newer day:
> New loves are sweet as those that went before:
> Free love—free field—we love but while we may.

In his last meeting with Iseult, Tristram confesses his creed brutally, at the same time relating how the Round Table—"first mainly thro' that sullying of our Queen"—has come steadily toward his own position.

> "Can Arthur make me pure
> As any maiden child? lock up my tongue
> From uttering freely what I freely hear?
> Bind me to one? The wide world laughs at it.
> And worldling of the world am I, and know
> The ptarmigan that whitens ere his hour
> Woos his own end; we are not angels here
> Nor shall be."

With this judgment the king's little fool, Dagonet, who is one of the minor heroes of this Idyll, has been forced to agree. Arthur himself is king of fools, says Dagonet, since he

> "Conceits himself as God that he can make
> Figs out of thistles, silk from bristles, milk
> From burning spurge, honey from hornet-combs,
> And men from beasts—Long live the king of fools!

Now it chanced that on the night of Tristram's love-meeting, as he clasped round Iseult's neck the rubies he had won in the Tournament of Dead Innocence, King Mark came upon them "out of the dark, just as the lips had touched," and clove the traitor through the brain. And it was at this very time that it was known at Camelot that Queen Guinevere, having been trapped by Modred in a love-meeting with Lancelot, had fled from court to the nuns of Almesbury.

> That night came Arthur home, and while he climbed,
> All in a death-dumb, autumn-dripping gloom,
> The stairway to the hall, and look'd and saw
> The great Queen's bower was dark,—about his feet
> A voice clung sobbing till he question'd it,
> "What art thou?" and the voice about his feet
> Sent up an answer, sobbing, "I am thy fool,
> And I shall never make thee smile again."

The two concluding poems might be called the resolution of the tragedy, wherein we are reconciled and made to understand something of the peace and hope that may follow defeat; for, as in most great tragedies, it is not the death of the hero which is the principal tragic fact. In the Idyll of "Guinevere" we have the reconciliation—in a sense—of Arthur and Guinevere, and the repentance and spiritual salvation of the queen.* The final meeting and parting of these two is one of the great scenes of the whole work, in which we are made to rise, so to say, "out of the mist and hum of that low land" where we have watched the decay of the kingdom, toward the moral and imaginative heights of "The Passing of Arthur." Yet it is at the same time a scene which brings out clearly the difficulty of the problem Tennyson had set himself in trying to portray this king whom Guinevere describes, in her final moment of clear-sightedness, as "the highest and most human too," but whom she has formerly felt—not without cause—to be either more or less

* Lancelot, we have learned in passing, is also to "die a holy man," but Tennyson never concluded Lancelot's story for the *Idylls*, though his son records having urged him to do so.

than human. The place is the convent at Almesbury, where the queen sits brooding on the past, and, remembering that first ride with Lancelot through the spring woods, grows "half-guilty in her thoughts again." Then—

> There rode an armed warrior to the doors.
> A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery ran,
> Then on a sudden a cry, "The King." She sat
> Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armèd feet
> Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors
> Rang coming, prone from off her seat she fell,
> And grovell'd with her face against the floor:
> There with her milkwhite arms and shadowy hair
> She made her face a darkness from the King:
> And in the darkness heard his armèd feet
> Pause by her; then came silence, then a voice,
> Monotonous and hollow like a ghost's
> Denouncing judgment, but tho' changed, the King's:
>
> "Liest thou here so low, the child of one
> I honour'd, happy, dead before thy shame?
> Well is it that no child is born of thee.
> The children born of thee are sword and fire,
> Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
> The craft of kindred and the godless hosts
> Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea;
> Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right arm,
> The mightiest of my knights, abode with me,
> Have everywhere about this land of Christ
> In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.
> And knowest thou now from whence I come—from him,
> From waging bitter war with him: and he,
> That did not shun to smite me in worse way,

Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,
He spared to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight: but many a knight was slain;
And many more, and all his kith and kin
Clave to him, and abode in his own land.
And many more when Modred raised revolt,
Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.
And of this remnant will I leave a part,
True men who love me still, for whom I live,
To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.
Fear not: thou shalt be guarded till my death.
Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
Have err'd not, that I march to meet my doom.
Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,
That I the King should greatly care to live;
For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.
Bear with me for the last time while I show,
Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou has sinn'd.
For when the Roman left us, and their law
Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways
Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a deed
Of prowess done redress'd a random wrong.
But I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood-errant of this realm and all
The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair Order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.
I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,

To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honour his own word as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.
And all this throve before I wedded thee,
Believing, 'lo mine helpmate, one to feel
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy.'
Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
Then others, following these my mightiest knights,
And drawing foul ensample from fair names,
Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine
I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong,
Not greatly care to lose; but rather think
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
To sit once more within his lonely hall,
And miss the wonted number of my knights,
And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
As in the golden days before thy sin.
For which of us, who might be left, could speak
Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at thee?
And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,
And I should evermore be vex'd with thee
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.

For think not, tho' thou wouldst not love thy lord,
Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.
I am not made of so slight elements.
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
I hold that man the worst of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house;
For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,
Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps
The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse
With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.
Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!
Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart
Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people, and their bane."

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch
Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
Far off a solitary trumpet blew.
Then waiting by the doors the warhorse neigh'd
As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:

"Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce
law,
The doom of treason and the flaming death,
(When first I learnt thee hidden here) is past.
The pang—which while I weigh'd thy heart with one

Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn—is also past—in part.
And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.
But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee—
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's: nay, they never were the King's.
I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd; and mine own flesh,
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
'I loathe thee:' yet not less, O Guinevere,
For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life
So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow:
They summon me their King to lead mine hosts
Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against the man they call
My sister's son—no kin of mine, who leagues
With Lords of the White Horse, heathen, and knights,
Traitors—and strike him dead, and meet myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.

And thou remaining here wilt learn the event;
But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side; see thee no more—
Farewell!"

And while she grovell'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
Perceived the waving of his hands that bless'd.

Then, listening till those armèd steps were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found
The casement: "peradventure," so she thought,
"If I might see his face, and not be seen."
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
And near him the sad nuns with each a light
Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore.
And while he spake to these his helm was lower'd,
To which for crest the golden dragon clung
Of Britain; so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.
And even then he turn'd; and more and more
The moony vapour rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray
And grayer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Nothing could show better than this famous scene the distance which we have gone from Tennyson's age even in the passing of a single generation. For

his own time it was commonly chosen as a supreme test of his greatness;* for ours it is often a matter either of scorn or apology. And in this case the difference can not be explained, as in some others, by the medievalism of the material: this injured husband-king, declaiming ethics and sociology to the guilty woman lying at his feet, setting forth his own greatness and his aloofness from ordinary men, and at the same time allowing himself ascetically sensuous allusions to her "golden hair" and "imperial-moulded form," is no more medieval than he is modern, no more pagan than Christian. (Imagine Christ sermonizing thus self-consciously before prostrate womanhood!) He comes dangerously near, even in his heroic proportions, giving the impression of being a prig or a cad. It is interesting to figure to one's self what a poet of our generation would make of the same scene,—what elements of taciturn self-restraint, of quasi-scientific sympathy with feminine sin, of recognition of masculine and marital limitations, of diminished respect for royalty no matter how respectable the king, of humorous or satiric instead of didactic self-consciousness, would replace those in the original. It does not follow that the twentieth-century Arthur would be

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* Said Gladstone: "Wherever [Arthur] appears, it is as the great pillar of the moral order, and the resplendent top of human excellence. But even he only reaches to his climax in these two really wonderful speeches." And Dean Alford, reviewing the *Idylls* in the *Contemporary*, thought it certain that there is no "creation in the realm of poetry, . . . for pathos and majesty united, equal to the last interview between the king and his unworthy queen."

the better of the two. It was the temptation of the Victorian hero to be talkatively moral, and to mingle a decent respect for kings and queens with a reverent regard for the simple domestic joys and virtues, which reminds us a little of the royal furniture of the same period, as it may now be seen in Windsor Castle; it is the temptation of the hero of our time to be wholly silent not only respecting his own virtues but regarding private morals in general, and to be more fearful of seeming servile or priggish than bad. If we remember this, we shall correct the perspective of our judgment whenever the didactic element becomes prominent in Tennyson's narrative. We must also recall his purpose —impossible, perhaps, but not unintelligible—to present in Arthur the figure of "ideal manhood closed in real man," an incarnation as sinless as that of Christ yet more human because touched by the personal love of woman. Returning in this way to something like the poet's own standpoint, we may be able to enjoy the admittedly marvelous art of the Guinevere scene.

With the final poem, "The Passing of Arthur," the difficulties we have been considering happily disappear. Freed now from the purely human, the domestic, side of his life, Arthur is again the king warring on the border between the terrestrial and the supernatural world. The symbolism of his last struggle with the forces of evil in the great Battle of the West, of the return of the magic sword Excalibur to the lake whence it came, and of his own

parallel return to the great deep of the world beyond mankind, is all intensely simple, vivid and moving on the side of physical imagery, and broadly appealing in its spiritual sublimity. In Malory's prose the story is one of the chief glories of the English language of the Middle Age, and in Tennyson's verse it is one of the chief glories of the English of modern times. I give here only the closing portion of the final version, which, save for the last thirty lines, is the original "Morte d'Arthur" in which Tennyson first endeared the story to modern readers.

MORTE D'ARTHUR

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their lord,
King Arthur. Then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land:
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls

Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more; but, let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known:
But now delay not: take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere:
Watch what thou seëst, and lightly bring me word."

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
"It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm—
A little thing may harm a wounded man;
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stepp'd,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,

Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded king.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag."

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
"Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight:
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

"And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? Deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? But were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, 'King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost."

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
"What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds."

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
"Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,

Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
But ere he dipp'd the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
"Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,

So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere."

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
"My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words;
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, "Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die."
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang

Sharp-smitten with the dint of armèd heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms,
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold: and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, "Place me in the barge."
So to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against a brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the daïs-throne—were parch'd with dust;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the King;

Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world,
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge:
"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seëst—if indeed I go
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)—
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

But when that moan had pass'd for evermore,
The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn
Amazed him, and he groan'd, "The King is gone."
And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme,
"From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron crag;
Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet, and cried,
"He passes to be King among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes again; but—if he come no more—
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black boat,
Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three whereat we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with living light,
They stood before his throne in silence, friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need?"

Then from the dawn it seem'd there came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb
Ev'n to the highest he could climb, and saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.

In leaving our reading of the *Idylls* there are one or two things still to be said, with respect to difficulties or objections that come in between these poems and the taste of our time. For example, there is the feeling that Tennyson's Arthur is a huge mass of anachronisms. Our generation is full of the historical spirit, and in particular has learned a good deal about ancient and medieval romance. We have become conscious that the well-mannered orators of Pope's *Iliad* are not the barbaric, swift-spoken warriors of Homer; and in like manner we feel that the chivalric gentlemen of Tennyson's Round Table are not ancient Britons—not even such frankly and agreeably villainous medieval heroes as those of Scott. And as we have a romantic love for the primitive, we may feel disposed to prefer the cavemen depicted by some of our contemporaries to these knights who have neither the charms of the

cavemen nor of ourselves. In part this is a matter quite beyond argument. But since every one admits that anachronism is not necessarily a fault in art—that Shakespeare's Macbeth is none the worse for not being a primitive Scot, nor Imogen for not being a primitive Briton—the real question is not whether Tennyson's Arthurian tales are true to the elements of any particular age, but whether they are consistent with themselves and true to important elements common to every age. As to self-consistency, I have already tried to show that what the *Idylls* lack in this respect is due to their peculiar blend of pure and symbolic narrative, and that if one does not like that sort of thing there is nothing more to be said. Apart from this, their characterization will generally prove to be soundly human. The moral theme which runs throughout the whole series of poems, and—as we have seen—tends to offend our distaste for the didactic, is the very element by which Tennyson sought to make a story taking its origin in one particular age valid for any age in the whole cycle of man's life.

This last point deserves some further comment. It must have become clear, in our examination of the *Idylls,* that Tennyson was deeply interested in the dual nature of humanity and in its progress from what he repeatedly calls "the beast" to a more spiritual character. One great sign and symbol of this progress he took to be the institution of monogamy —of love expressing itself in a permanent relationship between a man and one woman. For it is

precisely the marriage relation which links man closely with the animal world, in its function of perpetuating the race, and at the same time comes to mean something as different as possible from anything which exists in the merely animal world. In the development of the race, fidelity to this ideal aspect of love grows in purity and significance—so Tennyson would say—just according as real progress, individual or social, is being made. Hence his symbolic story of "sense at war with soul," of the struggle between man the beast and man the spirit, is essentially the story of the effort to maintain the law of chastity—not, as we have seen, the chastity of asceticism but that of marriage. The effective center of the purity of the kingdom was to be the wedded love of Arthur and his queen; the corruption of that center becomes the source of the corruption of the whole. This is Tennyson's chief contribution to the saga; for the guilty love of Lancelot and Guinevere, though of course a tragic element of the original story, played no such pervasive part as in the *Idylls*. There was, to be sure, as I pointed out early in the chapter, one version of the tale in which the destruction of the kingdom turned on the matter of sexual immorality—Arthur's love for Bellicent; but that was represented as an instance of the ignorant following of destiny, like the Œdipus story and many another, not of the diseased responsible will. And there was absolutely nothing corresponding to Tennyson's intertwining of guilt in love with the whole matter of

the loyalty and efficiency of the Round Table knighthood. This intertwining means, then, that in the poet's conception there is one safe *via media* between the doctrines of medieval Christianity and those of secularism: the Kingdom of Heaven is to be won by striving,—won on the real earth,—and the strength of its warriors is to reside neither in monastic asceticism nor lawless freedom, but in the loyalty of individuals to self-imposed ideals, of which one of the greatest is pure and hallowed marital love. Tennyson was always true to this conception, throughout his life and his poetry alike, and it formed the source of what some are pleased to call the "timid domestic morality" of the *Idylls of the King*. It is open to any one to confess that he prefers the Arthurian story to be free of all such ethical baggage; it is also open to any who choose, to deny the soundness of the poet's conception of the importance of monogamy in social evolution; but there is no good reason for misunderstanding its place in his treatment of the story.

Some readers who have no difficulty with this matter of the moral symbolism of the poems, are perplexed by what seems to be the pessimism with which it is worked out. Thus the late Stopford Brooke, one of the best interpreters of certain portions of the *Idylls,* observes at the conclusion of his survey that Tennyson makes the whole effort to establish the purity of wedded love utterly break down. "I do not comprehend his position. I sometimes think that the hopelessness of the years in

which he wrote the *Idylls* seized upon him, and he ceased for a time to believe in the victory of good. . . . The thing he most insists on is made by him to be the impossible thing. This is an excessively curious conclusion for Tennyson to come to. Every one in the *Idylls,* save [Arthur, Percivale, and Sir Bors,] thinks this vow too much for mortal man. Merlin says that no one can keep it. Vivien and Mark, of course, laugh it to scorn. Guinevere declares it to be impossible, and Lancelot knows it. Gawain openly adopts unchastity, Pelleas says that the king has made his knights fools and liars; Tristram, that he himself had sworn but by the shell, that the strict vow snaps itself. . . . Etarre is as immoral as Tristram, and both far more so than they are in the original tales. Rome in its decadence, France under the Regent, were not so wholly evil as Arthur's court."

If my outline of the *Idylls* has served its purpose, it will be seen that Brooke's query is readily answered. It is, of course, quite within reason to claim that Tennyson exaggerated the picture of the corruption of the kingdom, as he may be said to have exaggerated its ideal condition in the beautiful days of its prime; in both cases it was a natural result of his symbolic purpose. But there is no need to misunderstand his intention. The denials of the possibility of chastity, made so often in the story, are always the voice either of depraved personal wills, or of skeptical onlookers, or of those who have been corrupted by the unfaith of others. They

are precisely the denials made in every age. They are rooted deep, too, in that primitive nature whose survival or recrudescence Tennyson was depicting. In other words, he was true to the facts of life as well as to its ideals. He saw, and represented faithfully, what some persons suppose to be the discovery of the biologists, anthropologists, and novelists of the present age,—that man is *not* naturally monogamous, that the Round Table vow flies straight in the face of his nature. Yet, after all, it is kept in Arthur's kingdom passing well, until the court itself shows the rift within the lute. Then begins the great reversion to the beast. Is this pessimistic? Just so far as the whole conclusion of the *Idylls* is pessimistic. One effort has failed; one more kingdom, intended to approximate the Kingdom of Heaven, has gone. Arthur himself is to pass, and his mind is clouded with a doubt. This doubt chiefly concerns the understanding of the purposes of God. But of some things he has no doubt: it does not occur to him to question whether his aims have been the right ones. He has no uncertainty as to whether those aims could have been realized if only his realm had remained faithful. He still knows that he passes only to return, and that God fulfils himself in many ways. Countless generations, unknown kingdoms, will take up the old effort anew. There is no break in the progress: even as the bark that bore the king to the great deep disappeared utterly from view, "the new sun rose bringing the new year."

IV

INTERPRETATIONS OF CHARACTER

POETRY may sometimes, as we have seen, be used to express the personal feelings of the writer, or, again, to narrate and interpret events like those of epic story. And sometimes it may combine these two methods in one, by presenting an experience through the personality of a speaker whose character is brought before us as he speaks. This is the method of the drama, and in single poems it appears in the dramatic lyric or monologue. Though specimens of the latter type of poetry may be traced in almost any age, it is particularly characteristic of the nineteenth century, and Tennyson was one of the poets to make it important. Browning, his great contemporary, did still more for it, and both of them evidently valued very highly (though I do not know that they ever talked about it) the opportunity given by this form to study types of character which had interested them. There is, indeed, nothing in which modern poets are so much interested as the inner life, and what may be called its more reflective emotions; and there is no kind of poetry so well fitted to represent this interest, in condensed form, as the dramatic monologue.

It is worth while to note some differences which

appear in the use made of the monologue. Sometimes it is *really* dramatic, suggesting action as it proceeds, and we can follow this action, if the work is well done, without anything corresponding to stage directions. At the other extreme are certain monologues wholly without action: we may be interested to know who the speaker is, but it makes no difference where he is placed, nor does the scene change as he proceeds. Of the two monologues of Browning's which are probably best known, "My Last Duchess" and "Rabbi Ben Ezra," the first illustrates the one type, the second the other. Tennyson, like Browning, usually prefers the type in which the scene counts for something, but he is not so likely as Browning to make the action really develop as the poem proceeds. The speakers in his monologues, too, exist rather more for their own sake, and less for that of other persons: there is none of them, I think, who introduces another person with such vividness as the Duke of Ferrara presents his "last Duchess," or as David, the speaker in "Saul," presents the king. (Perhaps we may except "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," in which the subject of the poem is not the speaker but the person addressed.) Another difference between the two poets is that Browning was more likely to take historical personages for the subjects of his monologues, newly interpreting a character or a situation already known to students of the past, while Tennyson was disposed to present new characters developed from his own experience. Yet there are

important exceptions to this in his "Simeon Stylites" and "Ulysses."

In the early volume of 1832 appeared two or three poems which we can now see to be forerunners of Tennyson's interest in this form. For instance, there were the studies of rural maidenhood in Lincolnshire, "The Miller's Daughter" and "The May Queen," in the first of which the maiden's lover speaks reminiscently after many years have passed over their married life, while in the second the speaker is the maiden herself. "Tender and true" Carlyle called the sketch of the eager girl who was to be wakened early on May-day morning, and who, in the sequel, changed the note to meditations on her early death; but our present-day taste finds the pathos rather too obvious and self-conscious. At any rate, we may admit that Tennyson realized the character and the situation keenly. Side by side with these homely studies was one richly elaborated, on a classical theme, "Œnone." This is not a true monologue, since it opens with some twenty lines which set the scene and introduce the speaker; but by omitting these, as the poet would probably have done at a later period, the pure type would be obtained. Œnone, we must remember, was the Trojan maiden whom Paris, in his shepherd days, had wooed in the countryside, and whom he had deserted because of Aphrodite's promising him the love of Helen of Sparta. Her lament over his loss seems almost a lyric rather than a monologue, and moves as if to music, with an ever-recurring refrain

addressed to "Mother Ida," the chief mountain of Troas. Through this lyric mood emerges the narrative, giving the ancient story of "the judgment of Paris" from Œnone's standpoint. The art of the youthful Tennyson is conspicuous in the rather excessive emphasis on the element of decoration, lovely descriptive detail being so wrought upon the story as to tend to attract the chief attention of the reader to itself. (Thus Lockhart, in the *Quarterly Review,* maliciously observed that the "luxuriant trellis-work" of nature description was evidently devised for the reader's sake, "because if there was one thing which 'mother Ida' knew better than another, it must have been her own bushes and brakes.") It is for this very charm of vocal melody and beauty that many persons value the poem; but if one looks more deeply, it will be seen that it was intended to be a real study, as well, of the forces acting upon character through both the will and the feelings. In particular, the poet's own moral creed may be found in the lines put into the mouth of the wisest of the goddesses, Pallas Athene.

ŒNONE

There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine

In cataract after cataract to the sea.
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
Stands up and takes the morning: but in front
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,
The crown of Troas.
Hither came at noon
Mournful Œnone, wandering forlorn
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.
She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

"O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:
The grasshopper is silent in the grass:
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
The purple flower droops: the golden bee
Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.

"O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O Caves
That house the cold crown'd snake! O mountain brooks,
I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls

Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,
A cloud that gather'd shape: for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

"O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
And dewy-dark aloft the mountain pine:
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd, white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

"O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent call'd me from the cleft:
Far up the solitary morning smote
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropp'd eyes
I sat alone: white-breasted like a star
Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard skin
Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
Cluster'd about his temples like a god's:
And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow brightens
When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart
Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
And listen'd, the full-flowing river of speech
Came down upon my heart.
"'My own Œnone.
Beautiful-brow'd Œnone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav'n

"For the most fair," would seem to award it thine,
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married brows.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He press'd the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added 'This was cast upon the board,
When all the full-faced presence of the gods
Ranged in the halls of Peleus; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere due:
But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
Delivering that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
Pallas and Aphroditè, claiming each
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of gods.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
It was the deep midnoon: one silvery cloud
Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
Lotos and lilies: and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarlèd boughs
With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.

"O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
And o'er him flowed a golden cloud, and lean'd

Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
Then first I heard the voice of her, to whom
Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that grows
Larger and clearer, with one mind the gods
Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
Proffer of royal power, ample rule
Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue
Wherewith to embellish state, 'from many a vale
And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with corn,
Or labour'd mine undrainable of ore.
Honour,' she said, 'and homage, tax and toll,
From many an inland town and haven large,
Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing citadel
In glassy bays among her tallest towers.'

"O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Still she spake on and still she spake of power,
'Which in all action is the end of all;
Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns
Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,
From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee king-born,
A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power
Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats
Above the thunder, with undying bliss
In knowledge of their own supremacy.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
Out at arm's length, so much the thought of power
Flatter'd his spirit; but Pallas where she stood
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear

Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
The while, above, her full and earnest eye
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

"'Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Again she said: 'I woo thee not with gifts.
Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
So shalt thou find me fairest. Yet, indeed,
If gazing on divinity disrobed
Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
Unbias'd by self-profit, oh! rest thee sure
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a god's,
To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,
Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
Commeasure perfect freedom.'
Here she ceas'd,
And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, 'O Paris,
Give it to Pallas!' but he heard me not,
Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me!

"O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.

Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder: from the violets her light foot
Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
Half-whisper'd in his ear, 'I promise thee
The fairest and most loving wife in Greece,'
She spoke and laugh'd: I shut my sight for fear:
But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm,
And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,
As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
And I was left alone within the bower;
And from that time to this I am alone,
And I shall be alone until I die.

"Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?
My love hath told me so a thousand times.
Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
When I pass'd by, a wild and wanton pard,
Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail
Crouch'd fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?
Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips press'd
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew
Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
My tall dark pines, that plumed the craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Foster'd the callow eaglet—from beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
The panther's roar came muffled, while I sat
Low in the valley. Never, never more
Shall lone Œnone see the morning mist
Sweep thro' them; never see them overlaid
With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I wish that somewhere in the ruin'd folds,
Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,
Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her
The Abominable, that uninvited came
Into the fair Peleïan banquet-hall,
And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
And bred this change; that I might speak my mind,
And tell her to her face how much I hate
Her presence, hated both of gods and men.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
In this green valley, under this green hill,
Ev'n on this hand, and sitting on this stone?
Seal'd it with kisses? water'd it with tears?
O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face?
O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?
O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
There are enough unhappy on this earth,
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:

I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,
Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
Conjectures of the features of her child
Ere it is born: her child!—a shudder comes
Across me: never child be born of me,
Unblest, to vex me with his father's eyes!

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
Walking the cold and starless road of Death
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armèd men.
What this may be I know not, but I know
That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire."

In the volume of 1842 Tennyson's full interest and skill in the monologue form became clear. Here there appeared some half dozen examples, studies of characters as different as Ulysses, Sir Galahad, and the hero of "Locksley Hall," which remain thor-

oughly alive and significant to-day. In passing, it is interesting to note that this is the very year of Browning's *Dramatic Lyrics,* the volume which included such notable monologues as "My Last Duchess" and "Count Gismond." Thus the two poets seem to have discovered the possibilities of the form at almost the same moment, without collusion or borrowing.

I have already referred to one of the monologues of 1842, the well-known "Lady Clara Vere de Vere." This fine lady has been guilty of a flirtation with a youth who put himself to death for love of her, and now has begun to entangle a country yeoman in her wiles. He, however, has understanding and resolution to resist her, and to turn upon her with the scorn of a democrat for a degenerate aristocracy.

> "The daughter of a hundred Earls,
> You are not one to be desired."

Since Lady Clara had, at any rate, shown some willingness to overstep the bounds of mere birth to smile on the young countryman, it was perhaps a little hard to lecture her on that particular subject. But Tennyson's public, overlooking this, welcomed the sturdy creed which was not so trite or obvious then as it seems now:

> A simple maiden in her flower
> Is worth a hundred coats-of-arms;

and the famous stanza, England's echo to Scotland's "A man's a man for a' that":

Trust me, Clara Vere de Vere,
From yon blue heavens above us bent
The gardener Adam and his wife
Smile at the claims of long descent.
Howe'er it be, it seems to me
'Tis only noble to be good;
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.

In this poem, it is plain, Tennyson was not depicting two individual characters so much as two types—the languid enchantress and the independent yeoman. The same thing had been true of "The May Queen"; she was not so much a distinct individual as a representative country maiden, with the bloom and pathos of her age. So, too, we may say of "Sir Galahad" and its companion piece, "St. Agnes' Eve": they are studies of perfect purity of heart, as incarnate in the medieval nun-saint and the spotless Knight of the Grail. The eve of St. Agnes' day (January twenty-first) was a time, according to ancient legendry, when a prayerful maiden might be granted a vision of her future husband; in the poem, a nun—the Bride of Heaven—desires only the vision of the Heavenly Bridegroom.

ST. AGNES' EVE

Deep on the convent-roof the snows
Are sparkling to the moon:
My breath to heaven like vapour goes:
May my soul follow soon!

The shadows of the convent-towers
  Slant down the snowy sward,
Still creeping with the creeping hours
  That lead me to my Lord:
Make Thou my spirit pure and clear
  As are the frosty skies,
Or this first snowdrop of the year
  That in my bosom lies.

As these white robes are soil'd and dark,
  To yonder shining ground;
As this pale taper's earthly spark,
  To yonder argent round;
So shows my soul before the Lamb,
  My spirit before Thee;
So in mine earthly house I am,
  To that I hope to be.
Break up the heavens, O Lord! and far,
  Thro' all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
  In raiment white and clean.

He lifts me to the golden doors;
  The flashes come and go;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
  And strows her lights below,
And deepens on and up! the gates
  Roll back, and far within
For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
  To make me pure of sin.
The sabbaths of Eternity,
  One sabbath deep and wide—
A light upon the shining sea—
  The Bridegroom with his bride!

SIR GALAHAD

My good blade carves the casques of men,
  My tough lance thrusteth sure,
My strength is as the strength of ten,
  Because my heart is pure.
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
  The hard brands shiver on the steel,
The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,
  The horse and rider reel:
They reel, they roll in clanging lists,
  And when the tide of combat stands,
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
  That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

How sweet are looks that ladies bend
  On whom their favours fall!
For them I battle till the end,
  To save from shame and thrall:
But all my heart is drawn above,
  My knees are bow'd in crypt and shrine:
I never felt the kiss of love,
  Nor maiden's hand in mine.
More bounteous aspects on me beam,
  Me mightier transports move and thrill;
So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
  A virgin heart in work and will.

When down the stormy crescent goes,
  A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows,
  I hear a noise of hymns:
Then by some secret shrine I ride;
  I hear a voice but none are there;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,

The tapers burning fair.
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chaunts resound between.

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
I find a magic bark;
I leap on board: no helmsman steers:
I float till all is dark.
A gentle sound, an awful light!
Three angels bear the holy Grail:*
With folded feet, in stoles of white,
On sleeping wings they sail.
Ah, blessed vision! blood of God!
My spirit beats her mortal bars,
As down dark tides the glory slides,
And star-like mingles with the stars.*

When on my goodly charger borne
Thro' dreaming towns I go,
The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,
The streets are dumb with snow.
The tempest crackles on the leads,
And, ringing, springs from brand and mail;
But o'er the dark a glory spreads
And gilds the driving hail.
I leave the plain, I climb the height;
No branchy thicket shelter yields;
But blessed forms in whistling storms
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

A maiden knight—to me is given
Such hope, I know not fear;
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
That often meet me here.

* Compare "The Holy Grail," page 151.

I muse on joy that will not cease,
  Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
Pure lilies of eternal peace,
  Whose odours haunt my dreams;
And, stricken by an angel's hand,
  This mortal armour that I wear,
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,
  Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
  And thro' the mountain-walls
A rolling organ-harmony
  Swells up, and shakes and falls.
Then move the trees, the copses nod,
  Wings flutter, voices hover clear:
"O just and faithful knight of God!
  Ride on! the prize is near."
So pass I hostel, hall, and grange;
  By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,
  Until I find the holy Grail.

In other monologues the element of individual character begins to come out more strongly. "Ulysses" and "Simeon Stylites" are almost equally interesting whether viewed as typical or as vividly personal. The latter poem is an extraordinarily vivid study of medieval ascetic sainthood, and in particular of the renowned saint who had done pennance for some thirty years on the top of a pillar. Every detail of his experience, physical and spiritual, is realized:

And tho' my teeth, which now are dropped away,
Would chatter with the cold, and all my beard

> Was tagg'd with icy fringes in the moon,
> I drown'd the whoopings of the owl with sound
> Of pious hymns and psalms, and sometimes saw
> An angel stand and watch me, as I sang.

Especially Tennyson brings out the singular combination of nobility and selfishness, of self-abasement and pride, which is characteristic of the self-saving aspirations of this distorted kind of Christianity. When the people come to worship at the foot of his pillar, St. Simeon deprecatingly tells them that they do ill to kneel to him—"I am a sinner viler than you all"—and at the same time he ventures to observe complacently:

> Yet I do not say
> But that a time may come . . .
> When you may worship me without reproach;
> For I will leave my relics in your land,
> And you may carve a shrine about my dust,
> And burn a fragrant lamp before my bones.

In the "Ulysses" we have again a strongly outlined personality, the familiar traveler and sage of Greek story, who also interests us as a type. The scene is Ithaca, some time after Ulysses's happy return from his long wanderings. Here the story of the *Odyssey* had left him, but even the ancients were not satisfied with that, and there had been a sequel telling of more wanderings in the hero's last years. Tennyson also took a hint from Dante, who, picturing the departure of Ulysses's company from the island of Circe, where they had been long detained

in ignoble comfort, represents their leader as saying: "Neither fondness for my son, nor piety for my old father, nor the due love that should have made Penelope glad, could overcome within me the ardour that I had to gain experience of the world, and of the vices of men, and of their valour. . . . 'O brothers,' said I, 'who through a hundred thousand perils have reached the West, to this so little vigil of your senses that remains be ye unwilling to deny the experience, following the sun, of the world that hath no people. Consider ye your origin; ye were not made to live as brutes, but for pursuit of virtue and knowledge.' "* So this indestructible desire for new adventure, new knowledge, is carried over to the last stage of the old voyager's life, and at the same time becomes, for Tennyson, a symbol of the corresponding spirit in humanity. The poet himself, with his usual disposition to emphasize the inner life, tells us that "Ulysses" was written in the sad period following the death of Hallam, "and gave my feelings about the need of going forward, and braving the struggle of life." Others have felt more disposed to read it as interpreting the perpetual "Westward ho!" of our race. The working out of the poem is truly dramatic: the ship is in the harbor, awaiting the evening breeze, and as Ulysses proceeds with his parting words he rises, summons the mariners, and makes his way toward the place of embarkation.

*Translation of Charles Eliot Norton.

ULYSSES

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That lov'd me, and alone; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vex'd the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known: cities of men,
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, and make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
  This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil

This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

More perfect workmanship than this, in the monologue form, Tennyson never accomplished. But in "Locksley Hall" (again in the volume of 1842) he went far ahead of the other monologues in completeness and originality of characterization,—in using the form for telling, as in a condensed novel, the tale of a man's life, both external and spiritual. The hero is a youth, and Tennyson said that the whole poem "represents young life, its good side, its deficiencies, and its yearnings;" but he is old enough to have suffered—in particular, to have been disappointed in love—and hence to be in the familiar mood of one who feels that he is old, and that life has been tested and has turned to ashes. One of the fascinating things about this character is that he stands, to some extent, for young England in the period when "Locksley Hall" was written, and that he will also stand fairly well for young England, or for young America, to-day. It was a period when new science and new invention were opening up undreamed-of things, and at the same time when the dominion of commerce, of money-getting, was proving depressing to idealists. Of course both these things are true in our time—and for that matter it is quite likely that they are true of every generation. Every new rank of humanity, coming to manhood, learns many new things, and is strongly impressed by their possibilities; every new generation finds its hopes and ideals interfered with by the sordid conventions of its elders, comes to the conclusion that it is living in an age of materialism

and oppression, and at times feels like fleeing to a desert island or committing suicide. It recovers itself, too, very much as the young man of "Locksley Hall" recovered himself. It is a pity, by the way, that this young man has not a name; he is a very distinct person, and his creator was hardly warranted in leaving him a bit of vivid anonymity against a rather commonplace English landscape.

Coming closer to this character, we discover that he was born in the Orient, the son of an army officer who had fallen in India, and had been left "a trampled orphan and a selfish uncle's ward." His boyhood was spent at the uncle's country-seat, Locksley Hall, and here the world opened up to his developing mind in the wonderful way it always should; Tennyson finely compares the experience to the lights of London, reflected in the sky, as they attract the country boy on a stage-coach traveling toward "the throngs of men." The future became his chief interest, and he was eagerly concerned with the social progress to be expected for mankind, "the vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be." In particular he recalls two of these visions, one of which is at this moment of the Great War being horridly fulfilled before all of us,—the development of aerial navigation, till one sees "the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;" the other, one which we still dream of, or perhaps dare to work for,—the end of warfare in "the parliament of man, the federation of the world." Then came the age-old experience of youthful love, refi-

ning his life and winning it through self to unselfishness, a change which Tennyson expressed in one of his finest poetic figures, beginning "Love took up the harp of life." And then the tragic disillusion —the conflict of love with the sordid interests of property. Amy, the sweetheart-cousin, is not of the stuff to withstand the "hoard of maxims" with which her family "preach down" her heart, and consents to be mated with one whom her lover counts no better than a country clown—a hunting squire, and a hard drinker at that, whose conversation will at least be made up of things "easy to understand," and who, lying by his bride at night, will be snorting or starting with images of the chase, for "like a dog, he hunts in dreams." The outcome is that the whole world seems to turn to a mass of social wants and social lies; the key to every door must be of gold—there is not even the honor of the battle-field to be earned in such an age—and the young man is robbed of his inheritance. He has gained knowledge, to be sure, but no real wisdom whereby to live, and to his jaundiced eye it appears that the same thing is true of the learning of all the world.

Having left the boyhood home, in such a mood as this, the young man at length finds himself close to the place once again, by the accident of a hunting trip; and it is at this moment that the poem opens, as he leaves his comrades for a few moments' melancholy soliloquy, running over the memories which I have just outlined. At length the bugle rouses him from his musings, and he pulls himself

together to rejoin the others. Some resolution is demanded: he will at least be up and off—somewhere. It occurs to him that for one born in the Orient the women of this tame and watery clime are essentially disappointing; why not return? A scene of passion, rather than of civilization, is after all best. But instantly this vision generates, so to say, its own antitoxin. As he conceives the rich and unhampered life of the barbaric tropics, he knows at once that his love of his own people and their social progress has not been killed. Neither has the future been destroyed; and the present age, with its new and daring hopes wrought by science, shall be the adopted mother for his orphan state. So saying, he passes to rejoin his companions. A thunder-storm is gathering, meantime, with threatening force; suppose it sweeps over the old mansion, and the lightning strikes—well and good! Let all that has belonged to boyhood go—one can still say Forward!

LOCKSLEY HALL*

Comrades, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis early morn:
Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle-horn.

'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews call,
Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley Hall;

* No subdivisions are indicated by Tennyson for this poem, but I have divided it by spaces into seven sections, which may help the reader to pass from one moment or mood to another.

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the sandy tracts,
And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to rest,
Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the West.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wander'd, nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of Time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed;
When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed:

When I dipp'd into the future far as human eye could see;
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be.

In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast;
In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;

In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd dove;
In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts
of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one
so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

And I said, "My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee."

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

And she turn'd—her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, "I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do me wrong;"
Saying, "Dost thou love me, cousin?" weeping, "I have loved thee long."

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his glowing hands;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper throng'd my pulses with the fulness of the Spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rush'd together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having known me—to decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine!

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathise with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is: thou art mated with a clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy: think not they are glazed with wine.
Go to him: it is thy duty: kiss him: take his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought:
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to understand—
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew thee with my hand!

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's disgrace,
Roll'd in one another's arms, and silent in a last embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of youth!
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth!

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Nature's rule!
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straiten'd forehead of the fool!

Well—'tis well that I should bluster!—Hadst thou less unworthy proved—
Would to God—for I had loved thee more than ever wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but bitter fruit?
I will pluck it from my bosom, tho' my heart be at the root.

Never, tho' my mortal summers to such length of years should come
As the many-winter'd crow that leads the clanging rookery home.

Where is comfort? in division of the records of the mind?
Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew her, kind?

I remember one that perish'd: sweetly did she speak and move:
Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore?
No—she never loved me truly: love is love for evermore.

Comfort? comfort scorn'd of devils! this is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken sleep,
To thy widow'd marriage-pillows, to the tears that thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never, never," whisper'd by the phantom years,
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of thine ears;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy pain.
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow: get thee to thy rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a tender voice will cry.
'Tis a purer life than thine; a lip to drain thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down: my latest rival brings thee rest.
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not his due.
Half is thine and half is his: it will be worthy of the two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.

"They were dangerous guides the feelings—she herself was not exempt—
Truly, she herself had suffer'd"—Perish in thy self-contempt!

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should I care?
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like these?
Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

Every gate is throng'd with suitors, all the markets overflow.
I have but an angry fancy: what is that which I should do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's ground,
When the ranks are roll'd in vapour, and the winds are laid with sound.

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honour feels,
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age!

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer drawn,
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of men:

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something
new:
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they
shall do:

For I dipp'd into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails.
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly
dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing
warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-
storm;

Till the war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle-flags
were furl'd
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm
in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.

So I triumph'd ere my passion sweeping thro' me left me dry,
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the jaundiced
eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of joint:
Science moves, but slowly slowly, creeping on from point to
point:

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion creeping nigher
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his youthful joys,
Tho' the deep heart of existence beat for ever like a boy's?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore,
And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a laden breast,
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the bugle-horn,
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for their scorn:

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moulder'd string?
I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's pleasure, woman's pain—
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain:

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, match'd with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for some retreat
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to beat;

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-starr'd;—
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far away,
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the heavy-fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march of mind,
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind.

There the passions cramp'd no longer shall have scope and breathing space:
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinew'd, they shall dive, and they shall run,
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the sun;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of the brooks,
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books—

Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I *know* my words are wild,
But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun or clime?
I, the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one by one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's moon in Ajalon!

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day:
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mother-Age (for mine I knew not) help me as when life begun:
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the sun.

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley Hall!
Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapour from the margin, blackening over heath and holt,
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow;
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

Forty-four years after "Locksley Hall" was published there appeared a sequel, called "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After," in which the young man of the former poem is represented in his old age. It is probably the only instance in literature where a young poet has made a study of youth, and then, in his own later years, has reconceived the same character grown old like himself; the result is therefore of extraordinary interest. Shortly after the time of the first "Locksley Hall," we now learn, the young wife Amy died in child-birth, while the disappointed lover found a mate more truly fitted for him in a long-time friend named Edith. Sixty years have rolled by: the wife is gone, a son and his wife have also passed away, leaving a son in their turn who is now at the same period of life that his grandfather was in the earlier poem. The scene opens just when the old master of Locksley Hall, Amy's long widowed husband, has died, and the youth and his grandfather meet in the ancestral village to be present for to-morrow's funeral. The old man is garrulous of both past and present; he is now concerned less with personal ills and disappointments than with

the ills and disappointments of the age. The younger generation is not fulfilling its promise; so the older generation has thought, from time immemorial. For one thing, it is growing doubtful of immortality, and if the notion "forever" be taken from the race, the old man fears the cry of "forward" will go with it. For another, the progress of Christianity has not made men really Christian—cruelty has raged alike under heathenism, Catholicism, French humanitarianism, and modern Protestantism. Nor is there any diminution, but rather increase, of the menaces to peace: dynamite and revolver now threaten us; Russia, the old barbarian of the North, looms on our Oriental boundaries (strange thought for the Allies of 1914!); and at home the Demos, the unchained democracy, has been taught that the cat is as large as the lion, and seems to be working toward its own doom as well as that of all the rest. Sometimes there appears to be danger of a return to the Dark Ages without their redeeming quality of faith: reverence for the old authorities gone, nothing takes its place; art and literature also leave reverence and reticence behind, and tend to drag us back toward the beast. Yet, despite these "gray thoughts," the youth of sixty years ago and his visions are not wholly dead, and the dream of world peace, of the federation of the world, returns in lines lovelier than any dictated by the younger imagination:

> Robed in universal harvest up to either pole she smiles,
> Universal ocean softly washing all her warless isles.

The old man's conclusion is that the forces of Evolution and Reversion work side by side; youth may still cry "Forward," but must be warned that the course of Time is not a straight line, but one which will continue to "crook and turn upon itself," nor can earth ever "gain her heavenly-best" except as divinity comes into humanity—"a God must mingle with the game." Meantime, breaking through these wandering thoughts of the great world and its problems, come the insistent images of the past, called up by the time and the place. Above all, the figure of the dead old squire in the Hall is present to the mind of his one-time rival, and the reconciliation that had come after their former bitterness becomes, in a confused but impressive fashion, a happy omen to him for the larger problems of the race. The man who to jealous eyes had seemed wholly evil was really in great part good; what had seemed everlasting hate had been swallowed up by the years.

"I that loathed, have come to love him. Love will conquer at the last."

In the later years of Tennyson's use of the dramatic monologue, he applied it more and more to realistic studies of modern English personalities. A number of these studies are in the broad Lincolnshire dialect which he knew so well and which he made the basis for some extraordinarily vivid portraiture. Unfortunately this dialect is pretty difficult to read, without elaborate glossarial aid; but

we must not omit a portion, at any rate, of the monologue of the old-time Northern Farmer—a portrait, says Stopford Brooke, carved with a chisel as vivid and as bold as that of Michelangelo. The subject is the head farmer of a squire's estate, lying on his death-bed, and the whole sketch was suggested to Tennyson by the story of such a character, who, when dying, was reported to have said: "God A'mighty little knows what he's about a-taking me. An' Squire will be so mad an' all." He is a strangely hard-souled old Pharisee, content with his past life whatever the parson may say, and disposed to think that his achievement of cultivating "Thurnaby waste" will compare very favorably, in any unprejudiced eye, with that of a man whose work consists in reading one sermon a week. His only consolation for dying unseasonably is that he will escape seeing the coming of the newfangled threshing-machine, with " 'is kittle o' steam," into his fields.

NORTHERN FARMER

OLD STYLE

Wheer 'asta bean saw long and mea liggin' 'ere aloan?
Noorse? thourt nowt o' a noorse: whoy, Doctor's abean an' agoan:
Says that I moant 'a naw moor aale: but I beant a fool:
Git ma my aale, fur I beant a-gawin' to break my rule.

Doctors, they knaws nowt, fur a says what's nawways true:
Naw soort o' koind o' use to saay the things that a do.
I've 'ed my point o' aale ivry noight sin' I bean 'ere.
An' I've 'ed my quart ivry market-noight for foorty year.

Parson's a bean loikewoise, an' a sittin' 'ere o' my bed.
"The amoighty's a taakin' o' you to 'issén, my friend," a said,
An' a towd ma my sins, an's toithe were due, an' I gied it in hond;
I done moy duty boy 'um, as I 'a done boy the lond.

* * * *

An' I hallus coom'd to 's church afoor moy Sally wur dead,
An' 'eard 'um a bummin' awaay loike a buzzard-clock[1] ower my 'ead,
An' I niver knaw'd whot a mean'd but I thowt a 'ad summut to saay,
An' I thowt a said what a owt to 'a said an' I coom'd awaay.

* * * *

But Parson a cooms an' a goas, an' a says it easy an' freea
"The amoighty's a taakin o' you to 'issén, my friend," says 'ea.
I weant saay men be loiars, thaw summun said it in 'aaste:
But 'e reads wonn sarmin a weeak, an' I 'a stubb'd Thurnaby waaste.

D'ya moind the waaste, my lass? naw, naw, tha was not born then;
Theer wur a boggle[2] in it, I often 'eard 'um mysen;
Moast loike a butter-bump,[3] fur I 'eard 'um about an' about,
But I stubb'd 'um oop wi' the lot, an' raaved an' rembled 'um out.

* * * *

Dubbut loook at the waaste: theer warn't not feead for a cow;
Nowt at all but bracken an' fuzz, an' loook at it now—
Warnt worth nowt a haacre, an' now theer's lots o' feead,
Fourscoor yows upon it an' some on it down i' seead.[4]

---

[1] Cockchafer
[2] Goblin.
[3] Bittern.
[4] Clover.

Nobbut a bit on it's left, an' I mean'd to 'a stubb'd it at fall,
Done it ta-year I mean'd, an' runn'd plow thruff it an' all,
If godamoighty an' parson 'ud nobbut let ma aloan,
Mea, wi' haate hoonderd haacre o' Squoire's, an' lond o' my oan.

Do godamoighty knaw what a's doing a-taakin' o' mea?
I beant wonn as saws 'ere a bean an' yonder a pea;
An' Squoire 'ull be sa mad an' all—a' dear a' dear!
And I 'a managed for Squoire coom Michaelmas thutty year.

A mowt 'a taaen owd Joanes, as 'ant not a 'aapoth[5] o' sense,
Or a mowt 'a taaen young Robins—a niver mended a fence:
But godamoighty a moost taake mea an' taake ma now
Wi' aaf the cows to cauve an' Thurnaby hoalms to plow!

* * * *

But summun 'ull come ater mea mayhap wi' 'is kittle o' steam
Huzzin' an' maazin' the blessed fealds wi' the Divil's oan team.
Sin' I mun doy I mun doy, thaw loife they says is sweet,
But sin' I mun doy I mun doy, for I couldn abear to see it.

What atta stannin' theer fur, an' doesn bring ma the aale?
Doctor's a 'toattler,[6] lass, an a's hallus i' the owd taale;
I weant break rules fur Doctor, a knaws naw moor nor a floy;
Git ma my aale I tell tha, an' if I mun doy I mun doy.

A companion sketch was that of the "Northern Farmer—new style," representing the type which had developed since one of this class could hope to marry money; for him "Proputty, proputty, proputty" is the theme which sounds from the very legs

[5] Ha'pennyworth.
[6] Teetotaller.

of his horse "as they canters away," and he sagaciously demonstrates to his son that the pursuit of property is akin to the pursuit of virtue, since it is to be observed that

"'Tis'n them as 'as munny as breaks into 'ouses an' steals,
Them as 'as coats to their backs an' taakes their regular meals."

Later, again, we have "The Northern Cobbler," who, having won his way back to sobriety after years of drunkenness, kept a bottle of gin in the house so as to look his "hennemy strait i' the face."

"Wouldn't a pint 'a sarved as well as a quart? Naw doubt;
But I liked a bigger feller to fight wi', an' fowt it out."

In the very year of his death Tennyson published the final study of this series, "The Church-Warden and the Curate," wherein a rural churchman gives sage advice to the new incumbent of the parish:

"If iver tha means to git 'igher
Tha mun tackle the sins o' the world, an' not the faults o' the Squire.
. . . But niver not speak plaain out, if tha wants to git forrards a bit,
But creeap along the hedge-bottoms, an' thou'll be a Bishop yit."

It will be seen that in these Lincolnshire sketches Tennyson exhibited a rich sense of humor such as would scarcely be expected from the reading of the greater portion of his poetry, though it was far

from a surprise to those who knew him personally. He did not, like Browning, possess the art of blending the very fibers of humor and seriousness in the half-colloquial, half-inspired fashion which marks the finest passages in such monologues as "Fra Lippo Lippi," or many poems where Browning speaks in his own person. It has been alleged, though I am not sure how justly, that the occasional humorous passages in the *Idylls of the King* fall flat, generally speaking; at any rate it is true that they are hard to bring into harmony with the epic style and the cadences of the Tennysonian blank verse. But when he set forth freely, as in these Lincolnshire poems, with a style, a meter, and a subject-matter all akin and racy of the soil, he accomplished what neither Wordsworth nor Browning could quite have achieved, the one for want of humor, the other for want of simplicity.

It turned out, too, that Tennyson showed not only his keenest humor but his deepest reach of pathos in the monologue form; namely, in the great poem called "Rizpah," which appeared in 1880. Like almost all these character studies (except "Locksley Hall"), this had its origin in a real fact. The poet found in a penny magazine the story of an old woman of Brighton in the eighteenth century, whose son had been hanged for highway robbery, the body —as was then customary—being left on the gallows. "When the elements," so ran the item, "had caused the clothes and flesh to decay, his aged mother, night after night, in all weathers—and the more tempestu-

ous the weather the more frequent the visits—made a sacred pilgrimage to the lonely spot on the Downs, and it was noticed that on her return she always brought something away with her in her apron. Upon being watched it was discovered that the bones of the hanging man were the objects of her search, and as the wind and rain scattered them on the ground she conveyed them to her home. There she kept them, and, when the gibbet was stripped of its horrid burden, in the dead silence of the night she interned them in the hallowed enclosure of old Shoreham Churchyard." Tennyson also accepted from his source the allusion in his title to the biblical story of Rizpah, who, when her sons had been hanged by David at the behest of the Gibeonites, "took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water was poured upon them from heaven; and she suffered neither the birds of the heavens to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night." In the poem the bereaved mother has gone mad through grief, but is sufficiently recovered to be released from confinement. At length, being at the point of death, she is returned to a hospital, where she tells her story to an evangelistic visitor. There is some cause for regret here, I think, that the poet should have followed his prevailing practise of setting the time of the monologue at the moment when all the important action is over, instead of in the midst of it. Like many of the Victorians, he was rather over-fond of death-beds, and in the present instance,

since the death of the speaker is of no importance in itself, it introduces a false emphasis and an almost morbid pathos, when we are already sufficiently moved by the main action. One may also feel some regret that the auditor, the evangelist, appears to be such an incredibly bigoted and unsympathetic personage. But these drawbacks do not seriously impair the power of the poem, of which the late Mr. Swinburne declared that "the poet never lived on earth whose glory would not be heightened by the attribution of this poem to his hand." It has been noted more than once that Tennyson's success with this monologue, which deals with a personality not at all akin to his own,—of different sex and experience,—is an extraordinary example of the power of poetic genius to penetrate beyond the ordinary limitations that keep one human soul from understanding another. The supreme eleventh strophe is the voice of that element of motherhood which is in every parent heart, even though it be that of a man.

It may also be noted that in the "Rizpah" we have one of the greatest examples of Tennyson's metrical art. His favorite rhythm for these monologues is the same that we find here,—a six-stress line with an irregular number of syllables, its irregularity being true both to popular English metrical tradition and to colloquial representation. You can not easily name this meter: it is neither "dactylic" nor "anapestic," the line may begin with the accent or it may not; but it is always perfectly rhythmical, and almost always to be caught with ease simply

by following the natural emphasis of the sense. So it matters not whether we have a long trisyllabic line like

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and they never would let him be good,

with its full eighteen syllables, or the rhythmically equal line of only thirteen,—that wonderful line with which the poem opens, introducing us at once to the mood and the setting of the action. The speaker, in her delirium, believes that she is back on the lonely downs in the storm.

RIZPAH

Wailing, wailing, wailing, the wind over land and sea—
And Willy's voice in the wind, "O mother, come out to me."
Why should he call me to-night, when he knows that I cannot go?
For the downs are as bright as day, and the full moon stares at the snow.

We should be seen, my dear; they would spy us out of the town.
The loud black nights for us, and the storm rushing over the down,
When I cannot see my own hand, but am led by the creak of the chain,
And grovel and grope for my son till I find myself drenched with the rain.

Anything fallen again? nay—what was there left to fall?
I have taken them home, I have number'd the bones, I have hidden them all.

What am I saying? and what are *you?* do you come as a spy?
Falls? what falls? who knows? As the tree falls so must it lie.

Who let her in? how long has she been? you—what have you heard?
Why did you sit so quiet? you never have spoken a word.
O—to pray with me—yes—a lady—none of their spies—
But the night has crept into my heart, and begun to darken my eyes.

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what should *you* know of the night,
The blast and the burning shame and the bitter frost and the fright?
I have done it, while you were asleep—you were only made for the day.
I have gather'd my baby together—and now you may go your way.

Nay—for it's kind of you, Madam, to sit by an old dying wife.
But say nothing hard of my boy, I have only an hour of life.
I kiss'd my boy in the prison, before he went out to die.
"They dared me to do it," he said, and he never has told me a lie.
I whipp'd him for robbing an orchard once when he was but a child—
"The farmer dared me to do it," he said; he was always so wild—
And idle—and couldn't be idle—my Willy—he never could rest.
The King should have made him a soldier, he would have been one of his best.

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and they never would let him be good;
They swore that he dare not rob the mail, and he swore that he would;

And he took no life, but he took one purse, and when all was done
He flung it among his fellows—"I'll none of it," said my son.

I came into court to the Judge and the lawyers. I told them my tale,
God's own truth—but they kill'd him, they kill'd him for robbing the mail.
They hang'd him in chains for a show—we had always borne a good name—
To be hang'd for a thief—and then put away—isn't that enough shame?
Dust to dust—low down—let us hide! but they set him so high
That all the ships of the world could stare at him, passing by.
God 'ill pardon the hell-black raven and horrible fowls of the air,
But not the black heart of the lawyer who kill'd him and hang'd him there.

And the jailer forced me away. I had bid him my last good-bye;
They had fasten'd the door of his cell. "O mother!" I heard him cry.
I couldn't get back tho' I tried, he had something further to say,
And now I never shall know it. The jailer forced me away.

Then since I couldn't but hear that cry of my boy that was dead,
They seized me and shut me up: they fasten'd me down on my bed.
"Mother, O mother!"—he call'd in the dark to me year after year—
They beat me for that, they beat me—you know that I couldn't but hear;

And then at the last they found I had grown so stupid and still
They let me abroad again—but the creatures had worked their will.

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone was left—
I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will you call it a theft?—
My baby, the bones that had suck'd me, the bones that had laughed and had cried—
Theirs? O no! they are mine—not theirs—they had moved in my side.

Do you think I was scared by the bones? I kiss'd 'em, I buried 'em all—
I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night by the churchyard wall.
My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the trumpet of judgment 'ill sound,
But I charge you never to say that I laid him in holy ground.

They would scratch him up—they would hang him again on the cursed tree.
Sin? O yes—we are sinners, I know—let all that be,
And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's good will toward men—
"Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord"—let me hear it again;
"Full of compassion and mercy—long-suffering." Yes, O yes!
For the lawyer is born but to murder—the Saviour lives but to bless.

He'll never put on the black cap except for the worst of the worst,
And the first may be last—I have heard it in church—and the last may be first.

Suffering—O long-suffering—yes, as the Lord must know,
Year after year in the mist and the wind and the shower and the snow.

Heard, have you? what? they have told you he never repented his sin.
How do they know it? are *they* his mother? are *you* of his kin?
Heard! have you ever heard, when the storm on the downs began,
The wind that 'ill wail like a child and the sea that 'ill moan like a man?

Election, Election and Reprobation—it's all very well.
But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him in Hell.
For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord has look'd into my care,
And He means me I'm sure to be happy with Willy, I know not where.

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul, that is all your desire:
Do you think that I care for *my* soul if my boy be gone to the fire?
I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you may leave me alone—
You never have borne a child—you are just as hard as a stone.

Madam, I beg your pardon! I think that you mean to be kind,
But I cannot hear what you say for my Willy's voice in the wind—
The snow and the sky so bright—he used but to call in the dark,
And he calls to me now from the church and not from the gibbet—for hark!
Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—shaking the walls—
Willy—the moon's in a cloud—Good-night. I am going. He calls.

We saw in a former chapter that the nucleus of the poem *Maud* was found in a single dramatic lyric—one which Tennyson contributed to an annual called *The Keepsake,* in 1837. The elaborated work, which appeared in 1855, was called by the newly adapted name of "monodrama"; that is, a series of monologues (there are twenty-eight in all) spoken by the same person, and passing from one scene to another somewhat in the dramatic manner —as if the story of Hamlet should be told by his soliloquies alone. In fact the separate poems in *Maud* are all soliloquies, spoken in loneliness, the other characters and the action appearing largely through the memory of the speaker. It is possible to distinguish them pretty definitely as either lyrics or monologues: sometimes the utterance rises to what one feels could be fully expressed only in song, while at other times it is in colloquial speech, purely narrative or reflective. The whole series of these utterances runs the gamut of the feelings, from darkness to light, from light to deeper darkness, and finally to a kind of tragic reconciliation.

The hero of *Maud* is a character who reminds one rather strikingly of the young man of "Locksley Hall." Like the latter, he is of an irritable and morbid temperament—only now this temperament is treated not as typical of youth, but as exceptional, even pathological; he is haunted by hereditary gloom and the fear of insanity, which at length comes upon him. Again, he loves a girl whose family are estranged from him by social conditions, and is there-

convinced that his own misfortune is representative of a corrupt world. And finally, he too is saved, in some measure, by an awakening from mere self-contemplation to the active progress of his race. As for the girl he loves, she is more a form than a character, not being portrayed so clearly in many hundred lines as the Amy of "Locksley Hall" was in a dozen. Just how faithful, how heroic she might have been under the stress of trouble, we have little means of knowing: it is only her beauty, her lover's passion for her, and the shock of her death, which are significant for the poem. That its title should be her name is a kind of paradox; we know her only for what she was to the man she loved, yet to him she was so much that the title is justified.

I shall sketch the action of *Maud* very briefly indeed, with a view only to a sufficient understanding of the few numbers or scenes which are of supreme importance. On the whole Tennyson's workmanship here is rather more uneven than usual; he was hardly master of sufficient variety of manner to accomplish just what he sought to do in some of the changes of mood and style. *Maud* contains, therefore, some of the loveliest and some of the least lovely lyrics that he ever wrote.*

* When, for instance, the speaker tries to be lightly satiric, he is in danger of becoming tame, if not positively silly,—as in the twentieth poem, on the plainness of Maud's dresses:

Now I know her but in two,
Nor can pronounce upon it
If one should ask me whether
The habit, hat, and feather,
Or the frock and gipsy bonnet
Be the neater and completer.

The first monologue is a gloomy review of the speaker's early history: his father had died a violent death, apparently a suicide from despondency after "a vast speculation had failed," and the family of the man that had ruined him are now masters of the neighboring estate and its Hall. The age appears to be full of such villainies; commerce is dominating mankind, who therefore "prate of the blessings of peace," whereas in fact it is

> civil war, as I think, and that of a kind
> The viler, as underhand, not openly bearing the sword.

Meantime word comes that the Hall is being reopened, the new owners returning from abroad, and among them Maud, whom the young man remembers as a childish playmate.

> What is she now? My dreams are bad. She may bring me a curse.
> No, there is fatter game on the moor; she will let me alone.
> Thanks, for the fiend knows best whether woman or man be the worse.
> I will bury myself in myself, and the Devil may pipe to his own.

In the succeeding monologues the face and form of Maud begin to appear with increasing distinctness: in the second he sees her passing in the carriage, and she impresses him as

> Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null;

in the third her "cold and clear-cut face" haunts his sleep and drives him to walk out into the night;

in the fourth he sees her "pass like a light" in the high Hall-garden; in the fifth he hears her singing in the Hall meadow, and it is a song of war, such as wakes him to thought not only of her but of heroism and honor—ideals not for him, nor for the present age:

> She is singing an air that is known to me,
> A passionate ballad gallant and gay,
> A martial song like a trumpet's call!
> Singing alone in the morning of life,
> In the happy morning of life and of May,
> Singing of men that in battle array,
> Ready in heart and ready in hand,
> March with banner and bugle and fife
> To the death for their native land. . . .
>
> Singing of Death, and of Honour that cannot die,
> Till I well could weep for a time so sordid and
> mean,
> And myself so languid and base.

In the sixth he meets her at the head of the village street, and realizes that

> If Maud were all that she seemed,
> And her smile had all that I dreamed,
> Then the world were not so bitter
> But a smile could make it sweet.

In the seventh he recalls dimly a family tradition that he and Maud had been destined for each other, by their fathers, at birth. In the eighth he watches her in church; in the ninth he sees her riding with

two men on the moor; in the tenth he finds himself passionately jealous of one of the riders, who he conceives has come to woo her. The eleventh number is the great, brief lyric in which his longing for love, coupled with the old fear of madness, comes to as perfect expression as anything in the whole work:

O let the solid ground
  Not fail beneath my feet
Before my life has found
  What some have found so sweet:
Then let come what come may,
What matter if I go mad,
I shall have had my day.

Let the sweet heavens endure,
  Not close and darken above me
Before I am quite quite sure
  That there is one to love me;
Then let come what come may
To a life that has been so sad,
I shall have had my day.

With this the twelfth number is in utter contrast—a burst of love, now hopeful, in a rhythmic form that almost demands a singing utterance:

Birds in the high Hall-garden
  When twilight was falling,
Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,
  They were crying and calling.

Where was Maud? in our wood;
  And I, who else, was with her,
Gathering woodland lilies,
  Myriads blow together.

Birds in our wood sang
  Ringing thro' the valleys,
Maud is here, here, here
  In among the lilies.

I kiss'd her slender hand,
  She took the kiss sedately;
Maud is not seventeen,
  But she is tall and stately.

I to cry out on pride
  Who have won her favour!
O Maud were sure of Heaven
  If lowliness could save her.

I know the way she went
  Home with her maiden posy,
For her feet have touch'd the meadows
  And left the daisies rosy.

Birds in the high Hall-garden
  Were crying and calling to her,
Where is Maud, Maud, Maud?
  One is come to woo her.

Look, a horse at the door,
  And little King Charley snarling,
Go back, my lord, across the moor,
  You are not her darling.

In the thirteenth number the lover is haughtily scorned by Maud's brother, whom he has already described as an

oiled and curled Assyrian bull
Smelling of musk and of insolence.

In the fourteenth he visits Maud's garden at early morning:

> I heard no sound where I stood
> But the rivulet on from the lawn
> Running down to my own dark wood;
> Or the voice of the long sea-wave as it swelled
> Now and then in the dim-gray dawn;
> But I looked, and round, all round the house I beheld
> The death-white curtain drawn;
> Felt a horror over me creep,
> Prickle my skin and catch my breath,
> Knew that the death-white curtain meant but sleep,
> Yet I shudder'd and thought like a fool of the sleep
> of death.

(A bit of lover's psychology, sound and vivid, like Wordsworth's when at Lucy's door there comes suddenly the cry, "If Lucy should be dead!") The fifteenth number is a brief utterance of the haunting reflection "If I be dear." In the sixteenth Maud's brother has gone away, and the time for a declaration of love seems to be at hand; the seventeenth is a song in celebration of the day when it is made—

> Go not, happy day,
> From the shining fields,
> Go not, happy day,
> Till the maiden yields.

In the eighteenth he has wholly won her, and life is remade. After their parting, he comes homeward in the evening; and here some of the lines

wherein he shows how nature is transfigured by love are among the richest and finest in *Maud*.

There is none like her, none.
Nor will be when our summers have deceased.
O, art thou sighing for Lebanon
In the long breeze that streams to thy delicious East,
Sighing for Lebanon,
Dark cedar, tho' thy limbs have here increased,
Upon a pastoral slope as fair,
And looking to the South, and fed
With honey'd rain and delicate air,
And haunted by the starry head
Of her whose gentle will has changed my fate,
And made my life a perfumed altar-flame;
And over whom thy darkness must have spread
With such delight as theirs of old, thy great
Forefathers of the thornless garden, there
Shadowing the snow-limb'd Eve from whom she came.
Here will I lie, while these long branches sway,
And you fair stars that crown a happy day
Go in and out as if at merry play,
Who am no more so all forlorn,
As when it seem'd far better to be born
To labour and the mattock-harden'd hand,
Than nursed at ease and brought to understand
A sad astrology, the boundless plan
That makes you tyrants in your iron skies,
Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,
Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand
His nothingness into man.

* * * *

And ye meanwhile far over moor and fell
Beat to the noiseless music of the night!
Has our whole earth gone nearer to the glow
Of your soft splendours that you look so bright?

I have climb'd nearer out of lonely Hell.
Beat, happy stars, timing with things below,
Beat with my heart more blest than heart can tell,
Blest, but for some dark undercurrent woe
That seems to gnaw—but it shall not be so:
Let all be well, be well.

The nineteenth number discourses on the problem of the estranged families and the returning brother; the twentieth foresees a political dinner and dance at the Hall, to which the lover is not invited,—but he is to meet Maud in her rose-garden when the dancing is over; the twenty-first describes a single moment of that day, when a rose that floats down the brook from the Hall to his own grounds is interpreted as a love-token. Then comes the early morning scene, after the ball, in which he awaits her coming, as we have read it in a former chapter —"Come into the garden, Maud"—the climax of the passion of the poem, and the end of Part One.

Part Two opens with a reminiscent meditation, showing us that Maud's brother came upon the lovers in the garden with angry and insulting words, and that a duel followed, in which he fell. In the following scene the speaker has fled to Brittany, and on its desolate seashore lets his weary mind wander back and forth from immediate surroundings to haunting memories. The opening stanzas are among the most charming of Tennyson's studies of nature as viewed through a personal mood:

See what a lovely shell,
Small and pure as a pearl,
Lying close to my foot,
Frail, but a work divine,
Made so fairly well
With delicate spire and whorl,
How exquisitely minute,
A miracle of design!

What is it? a learned man
Could give it a clumsy name.
Let him name it who can,
The beauty would be the same.

The tiny cell is forlorn,
Void of the little living will
That made it stir on the shore.
Did he stand at the diamond door
Of his house in a rainbow frill?
Did he push, when he was uncurl'd,
A golden foot or a fairy horn
Thro' his dim water-world?

Slight, to be crush'd with a tap
Of my finger-nail on the sand,
Small, but a work divine,
Frail, but of force to withstand,
Year upon year, the shock
Of cataract seas that snap
The three-decker's oaken spine
Athwart the ledges of rock,
Here on the Breton strand.

But the shore is haunted: a ghost like Maud flits to and fro there, one that he knows to be not a true spirit, but a "juggle born of the brain." Then comes word that she is indeed dead.

Courage, poor heart of stone!
I will not ask thee why
Thou canst not understand
That thou art left for ever alone:
Courage, poor stupid heart of stone.—
Or if I ask thee why,
Care not thou to reply:
She is but dead, and the time is at hand
When thou shalt more than die.

After this another pause, followed by the lyric of passionate grief which had formed the nucleus of the whole work,* and which Swinburne called "the poem of deepest charm and fullest delight of pathos and melody ever written" by Tennyson.

O that 'twere possible
After long grief and pain
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again!

When I was wont to meet her
In the silent woody places
By the home that gave me birth,
We stood tranced in long embraces
Mix'd with kisses sweeter sweeter
Than anything on earth.

A shadow flits before me,
Not thou, but like to thee:
Ah Christ, that it were possible

* Forty lines of the original were omitted in the *Maud* version.

For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be.

It leads me forth at evening,
It lightly winds and steals
In a cold white robe before me,
When all my spirit reels
At the shouts, the leagues of lights,
And the roaring of the wheels.

Half the night I waste in sighs,
Half in dreams I sorrow after
The delight of early skies;
In a wakeful doze I sorrow
For the hand, the lips, the eyes,
For the meeting of the morrow,
The delight of happy laughter,
The delight of low replies.

'Tis a morning pure and sweet,
And a dewy splendour falls
On the little flower that clings
To the turrets and the walls;
'Tis a morning pure and sweet,
And the light and shadow fleet;
She is walking in the meadow,
And the woodland echo rings;
In a moment we shall meet;
She is singing in the meadow
And the rivulet at her feet
Ripples on in light and shadow
To the ballad that she sings.

Do I hear her sing as of old,
My bird with the shining head,
My own dove with the tender eye?
But there rings on a sudden a passionate cry,

There is some one dying or dead,
And a sullen thunder is roll'd;
For a tumult shakes the city,
And I wake, my dream is fled;
In the shuddering dawn, behold,
Without knowledge, without pity,
By the curtains of my bed
That abiding phantom cold.

Get thee hence, nor come again,
Mix not memory with doubt,
Pass, thou deathlike type of pain,
Pass and cease to move about!
'Tis the blot upon the brain
That *will* show itself without.

Then I rise, the eavedrops fall,
And the yellow vapours choke
The great city sounding wide;
The day comes, a dull red ball
Wrapp'd in drifts of lurid smoke
On the misty river-tide.

Thro' the hubbub of the market
I steal, a wasted frame,
It crosses here, it crosses there,
Thro' all that crowd confused and loud,
The shadow still the same;
And on my heavy eyelids
My anguish hangs like shame.

Alas for her that met me,
That heard me softly call,
Came glimmering thro' the laurels
At the quiet evenfall,
In the garden by the turrets
Of the old manorial hall.

Would the happy spirit descend,
From the realms of light and song,
In the chamber or the street,
As she looks among the blest,
Should I fear to greet my friend
Or to say "Forgive the wrong,"
Or to ask her, "Take me, sweet,
To the regions of thy rest"?

But the broad light glares and beats,
And the shadow flits and fleets
And will not let me be;
And I loathe the squares and streets,
And the faces that one meets,
Hearts with no love for me:
Always I long to creep
Into some still cavern deep,
There to weep, and weep, and weep
My whole soul out to thee.

In the following scene the anticipated doom has come, and the speaker is in the madhouse, conceiving himself to be dead, long dead, but not buried deep enough to gain rest from the clamor of earth and the chatter of his fellow corpses. It is a notable study of a deranged personality, but it was not in Tennyson's power to show his best art in the form of the grotesque.

Part Three represents the reawakening to life. The madness is dissolving—for the time being at least; and, as I have said, this recovery is due to a new interest in the world of men. War is in the air, Britain is arming. Commerce is no longer her only god; and as the broken man hears and joins in

the loyal battle-cry of his people, the phantom that has haunted him flies away, and he is again ready, like his spiritual kinsman of "Locksley Hall," to say "Forward!"

> Tho' many a light shall darken, and many shall weep
> For those that are crush'd in the clash of jarring claims,
> Yet God's just wrath shall be wreak'd on a giant liar;
> And many a darkness into the light shall leap,
> And shine in the sudden making of splendid names,
> And noble thought be freer under the sun,
> And the heart of a people beat with one desire;
> For the peace, that I deem'd no peace, is over and done,
> And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic deep,
> And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress, flames
> The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire.
> Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down like a wind,
> We have proved we have hearts in a cause, we are noble still,
> And myself have awaked, as it seems, to the better mind;
> It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill;
> I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind,
> I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assign'd.

A conclusion of this character is not well suited to please those moderns who have come to suspect, if not to hate, all war; and the fact that it had special reference to the War in the Crimea, surely one of the least exalting in which England ever engaged, made the passage particularly distasteful to some of the poet's own generation. We shall return to this topic in the next chapter, and see that Tennyson counted himself to be far from a lover of war for its own sake; here it is sufficient to remember that *Maud* is a study of a diseased soul, and the most

ardent pacifist will scarcely deny that there may be healing and redemptive elements, for sore and selfish natures, in the self-devotion which even the most regrettable conflicts engender. If it were not so, could we endure to remain alive in these years of our Lord which now pass over us?

On the whole, not many will view *Maud* as a very great, much less a perfect, work. It tempts us to test it by comparison with such studies of character in evolution as we find in important dramas, or in the finest progressive monologues of Browning, and Tennyson was neither a dramatist nor an imaginative psychologist of much complexity or depth. He was, however, very highly gifted in the expression of single and simple *moments* in which character is revealed. And after all, it is from this latter standpoint that *Maud* should be judged; it is a series of lyrical poems, as we have seen, and the parts are better than the whole.

Besides these character studies in monologue form, to which this chapter is chiefly devoted, Tennyson sometimes made use of the more conventional type of straightforward narrative. Perhaps only two of these narrative poems need be noticed here: "Dora," which appeared with the great group of monologues in 1842, and "Enoch Arden," which appeared with "The Northern Farmer" in 1864. Both these poems are studies in simplicity of character and conduct, and the first of them is also a study in simplicity of style, being written more in the manner of Wordsworth than of Tennyson. Words-

worth had for forty years been teaching his countrymen that the essentials of poetic feeling and thought could be achieved by relating the actions of common men in the language of common men; and Tennyson, though he belonged for the most part to another school, was quite sensible of the value of the Wordsworthian method. Wordsworth, on his part, was so much pleased with "Dora" that he told its author that he had himself been trying all his life to write a poem like it. But I doubt if many readers would count it the equal of the elder poet's "Michael." In a kind of bald brevity, to be sure, Tennyson outdid his master: his condensation, in this poem, for one who was not in the habit of sparing his words, was extraordinary and perhaps excessive. But there is little to say about a piece of work like "Dora"; it is a test of a certain special sort of appreciation, and if one does not care for its restrained substance and manner, "there's an end on't." Not a word, not a phrase, is to be loved for its own sake; not a sensation is to be indulged in as mere sensory pleasure; it is only as the poet has made us feel with the deep but familiar feelings of these ordinary people, that he has fulfilled his art.

DORA

With farmer Allan at the farm abode
William and Dora. William was his son,
And she his niece. He often look'd at them,
And often thought, "I'll make them man and wife."
Now Dora felt her uncle's will in all,
And yearn'd toward William; but the youth, because

He had been always with her in the house,
Thought not of Dora. Then there came a day
When Allan call'd his son, and said, "My son:
I married late, but I would wish to see
My grandchild on my knees before I die:
And I have set my heart upon a match.
Now therefore look to Dora; she is well
To look to; thrifty too beyond her age.
She is my brother's daughter: he and I
Had once hard words, and parted, and he died
In foreign lands; but for his sake I bred
His daughter Dora: take her for your wife;
For I have wish'd this marriage, night and day,
For many years." But William answer'd short;
"I cannot marry Dora; by my life,
I will not marry Dora." Then the old man
Was wroth, and doubled up his hands, and said:
"You will not, boy! you dare to answer thus!
But in my time a father's word was law,
And so it shall be now for me. Look to it;
Consider, William: take a month to think,
And let me have my answer to my wish;
Or, by the Lord that made me, you shall pack,
And never more darken my doors again."
But William answer'd madly; bit his lips,
And broke away. The more he look'd at her
The less he liked her; and his ways were harsh;
But Dora bore them meekly. Then before
The month was out he left his father's house,
And hired himself to work within the fields;
And half in love, half spite, he woo'd and wed
A labourer's daughter, Mary Morrison.

Then, when the bells were ringing, Allan call'd
His niece and said: "My girl, I love you well;
But if you speak with him that was my son,
Or change a word with her he calls his wife,

My home is none of yours. My will is law."
And Dora promised, being meek. She thought,
"It cannot be: my uncle's mind will change!"
And days went on, and there was born a boy
To William; then distresses came on him;
And day by day he pass'd his father's gate,
Heart-broken, and his father help'd him not.
But Dora stored what little she could save,
And sent it them by stealth, nor did they know
Who sent it; till at last a fever seized
On William, and in harvest time he died.
Then Dora went to Mary. Mary sat
And look'd with tears upon her boy, and thought
Hard things of Dora. Dora came and said:
"I have obey'd my uncle until now,
And I have sinn'd, for it was all thro' me
This evil came on William at the first.
But, Mary, for the sake of him that's gone,
And for your sake, the woman that he chose,
And for this orphan, I am come to you:
You know there has not been for these five years
So full a harvest: let me take the boy,
And I will set him in my uncle's eye
Among the wheat; that when his heart is glad
Of the full harvest, he may see the boy,
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone."
And Dora took the child, and went her way
Across the wheat, and sat upon a mound
That was unsown, where many poppies grew.
Far off the farmer came into the field
And spied her not; for none of all his men
Dare tell him Dora waited with the child;
And Dora would have risen and gone to him,
But her heart fail'd her; and the reapers reap'd,
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.
But when the morrow came, she rose and took

The child once more, and sat upon the mound;
And made a little wreath of all the flowers
That grew about, and tied it round his hat
To make him pleasing in her uncle's eye.
Then when the farmer pass'd into the field
He spied her, and he left his men at work,
And came and said: "Where were you yesterday?
Whose child is that? What are you doing here?"
So Dora cast her eyes upon the ground,
And answer'd softly, "This is William's child!"
"And did I not," said Allan, "did I not
Forbid you, Dora?" Dora said again:
"Do with me as you will, but take the child,
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone!"
And Allan said, "I see it is a trick
Got up betwixt you and the woman there.
I must be taught my duty, and by you!
You knew my word was law, and yet you dared
To slight it. Well—for I will take the boy;
But go you hence, and never see me more."
So saying, he took the boy that cried aloud
And struggled hard. The wreath of flowers fell
At Dora's feet. She bow'd upon her hands,
And the boy's cry came to her from the field,
More and more distant. She bow'd down her head,
Remembering the day when first she came,
And all the things that had been. She bow'd down
And wept in secret; and the reapers reap'd,
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.
Then Dora went to Mary's house, and stood
Upon the threshold. Mary saw the boy
Was not with Dora. She broke out in praise
To God, that help'd her in her widowhood.
And Dora said, "My uncle took the boy;
But, Mary, let me live and work with you:
He says that he will never see me more."

Then answer'd Mary, "This shall never be,
That thou shouldst take my trouble on thyself:
And, now I think, he shall not have the boy,
For he will teach him hardness, and to slight
His mother; therefore thou and I will go,
And I will have my boy, and bring him home;
And I will beg of him to take thee back:
But if he will not take thee back again,
Then thou and I will live within one house,
And work for William's child, until he grows
Of age to help us."
So the women kiss'd
Each other, and set out, and reach'd the farm.
The door was off the latch: they peep'd, and saw
The boy set up betwixt his grandsire's knees,
Who thrust him in the hollows of his arm,
And clapp'd him on the hands and on the cheeks,
Like one that loved him: and the lad stretch'd out
And babbled for the golden seal, that hung
From Allan's watch, and sparkled by the fire.
Then they came in: but when the boy beheld
His mother, he cried out to come to her:
And Allan set him down, and Mary said:
"O Father!—if you let me call you so—
I never came a-begging for myself,
Or William, or this child; but now I come
For Dora: take her back; she loves you well.
O Sir, when William died, he died at peace
With all men; for I ask'd him, and he said,
He could not ever rue his marrying me—
I had been a patient wife: but, Sir, he said
That he was wrong to cross his father thus:
'God bless him!' he said, 'and may he never know
The troubles I have gone thro'!' Then he turn'd
His face and pass'd—unhappy that I am!
But now, Sir, let me have my boy, for you

Will make him hard, and he will learn to slight
His father's memory; and take Dora back,
And let all this be as it was before."
So Mary said, and Dora hid her face
By Mary. There was silence in the room;
And all at once the old man burst in sobs:—
"I have been to blame—to blame. I have kill'd my son.
I have kill'd him—but I loved him—my dear son.
May God forgive me!—I have been to blame.
Kiss me, my children."
Then they clung about
The old man's neck, and kiss'd him many times.
And all the man was broken with remorse;
And all his love came back a hundred-fold;
And for three hours he sobb'd o'er William's child
Thinking of William.
So those four abode
Within one house together; and as years
Went forward, Mary took another mate;
But Dora lived unmarried till her death.

It is fair to note here the objection which some modern readers have to the style of this sort of poetry, whether Wordsworth's or Tennyson's,—an objection which I suppose many feel without fully understanding. The language of the characters, though carefully made simple and homely, is, after all, not the real language of common life. When Wordsworth's Michael says, "Herein I but repay a gift which I myself received at others' hands," it is not the actual speech of a mountain shepherd; when Tennyson's Mary says, "He will teach him hardness, and to slight his mother; therefore thou and I will go," it is a bit nearer the fact, but after

all not quite the fact; the very brevity and exactness of the speech, as of all the speeches in the poem, are unreal if one considers closely. In our time the desire for more faithful realism has led to much experiment in this direction, with some notable results—most noteworthy, perhaps, in certain narrative poems of Mr. Masefield's. There we have what Wordsworth only professed to give, "the real language of common life," even in poignant tragedy:

> "My innings now, my pretty dear," said he.
> "You wait a bit. I'll show you. Now you'll see."
>
> "He's to be hanged. Only a boy. My friend.
> I thought him just a boy; I didn't know.
> And Ern was killed, and now the boy's to end,
> And all because he thought he loved me so."*

The gripping veracity of this true colloquialism is effective in a new and, I think, a powerful and revealing way. I do not know what Wordsworth would have thought of it, or Tennyson, but I believe they would have had the grace to rejoice in the further fulfilment of some of their designs. Yet, after all, the photograph almost always loses its charm, while the less accurately veracious painting —if only it has the essence of truth—survives. So it is possible that "Michael" and "Dora" will outlive all our experiments in closer realism, quite worth while as these may be for the generation concerned. At any rate we can understand what the

* From "The Widow in the Bye Street."

older poets were doing: they were almost never writing down real human speech; even the style which approximated it was amphibious, so to say, combining something of the power of simple fact with the power of literary form,—seeking to get the effect of common utterance without its raggedness, volubility, and inaccuracy. Such a style is like the costume of an actor, or the drapery on a statue, which, though they represent actual practises, do not—unless for comic purposes—represent it without a certain selection, refinement, or elevation of detail.

This matter of refinement or elevation of common reality becomes still more noticeable in *Enoch Arden.* Here Tennyson is much more himself than in "Dora," and his method is more leisurely, even taking on something of epic dignity and largeness, especially since the adventures of his hero are associated with the great theme of English adventure on the sea. Yet the hero is a common fisherman and sailor, and again the poet seeks to present the simplicity of the character by a restrained and direct style. As to the veracity of his account of Enoch Arden, there has been more than one opinion. Walter Bagehot, in a keen and not unappreciative criticism, pointed his characterization of Tennyson as essentially the poet of the ornate style,* by alleging that Enoch's sentiments, as presented in the poem, are really those of his creator rather than his own. "Nothing," he said, "can be more

* In his essay on "Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning."

splendid than the description of the tropics as Mr. Tennyson delineates them" (this is the passage quoted on page 85), "but a sailor would not have felt the tropics in that manner. He would have known little of the 'scarlet shafts of sunrise,' and nothing of the 'long convolvuluses.' As in *Robinson Crusoe,* his own petty contrivances and his small ailments would have been the principal subject to him. 'For three years,' he might have said, 'my back was bad; and then I put two pegs into a piece of driftwood, and so made a chair; and after that it pleased God to send me a chill.' " Mr. Bagehot was suspicious, too, that Enoch's fineness of feeling respecting the conduct of life was as much idealized as his sensitiveness to external nature. It will be seen that there is opportunity here for some interesting argument respecting the limitations and the attainments of what we call common man; but I must deny myself the pleasure of entering upon it. It is sufficient to note that the description of the tropic landscape is not by any means characteristic of the style of *Enoch Arden* as a whole, and on the other hand to admit—as I have already done—that Tennyson was not pursuing a purely realistic method, but was lifting his material to a fineness or dignity of both feeling and expression which he thought was nevertheless essentially true to its nature.

The story of the poem is so well known that it need not be outlined. Even when written, it was found in the history of many a village, and the

newspaper of our time has not infrequent opportunities to entitle as "an Enoch Arden" some wanderer who has returned after having been thought to be dead and finds his wife married to another. Tennyson, we may note, heightens the tale in dignity and pathos by his treatment of the character of the second husband, who had been a wooer of Annie from childhood. I can find space here to represent the poem only by two impressive scenes at the close. The first is that in which Enoch, returning to his village, creeps to the window of his wife's home and sees the new family—partly his—within.

> And on the right hand of the hearth he saw
> Philip, the slighted suitor of old times,
> Stout, rosy, with his babe across his knees;
> And o'er her second father stoop'd a girl,
> A later but a loftier Annie Lee,
> Fair-hair'd and tall, and from her lifted hand
> Dangled a length of ribbon and a ring
> To tempt the babe, who rear'd his creasy arms,
> Caught at and ever miss'd it, and they laugh'd;
> And on the left hand of the hearth he saw
> The mother glancing often toward her babe,
> But turning now and then to speak with him,
> Her son, who stood beside her tall and strong,
> And saying that which pleased him, for he smiled.
>
> Now when the dead man come to life beheld
> His wife his wife no more, and saw the babe
> Hers, yet not his, upon the father's knee,
> And all the warmth, the peace, the happiness,
> And his own children tall and beautiful,
> And him, that other, reigning in his place,

Lord of his rights and of his children's love,—
Then he, tho' Miriam Lane had told him all,
Because things seen are mightier than things heard,
Stagger'd and shook, holding the branch, and fear'd
To send abroad a shrill and terrible cry,
Which in one moment, like the blast of doom,
Would shatter all the happiness of the hearth.

He therefore turning softly like a thief,
Lest the harsh shingle should grate underfoot,
And feeling all along the garden-wall,
Lest he should swoon and tumble and be found,
Crept to the gate, and open'd it, and closed,
As lightly as a sick man's chamber-door,
Behind him, and came out upon the waste.

And there he would have knelt, but that his knees
Were feeble, so that falling prone he dug
His fingers into the wet earth, and pray'd.

"Too hard to bear! why did they take me thence?
O God Almighty, blessed Saviour, Thou
That didst uphold me on my lonely isle,
Uphold me, Father, in my loneliness
A little longer! aid me, give me strength
Not to tell her, never to let her know.
Help me not to break in upon her peace.
My children too! must I not speak to these?
They know me not. I should betray myself.
Never: No father's kiss for me—the girl
So like her mother, and the boy, my son."

There speech and thought and nature fail'd a little,
And he lay tranced; but when he rose and paced
Back toward his solitary home again,
All down the long and narrow street he went
Beating it in upon his weary brain,

As tho' it were the burthen of a song,
"Not to tell her, never to let her know."

Later, on his sick-bed, Enoch learns that his wife's heart is still torn, at times, by doubt of his life or death, and with this in mind makes his plans for the end. His instructions to the woman who is caring for him are given in a speech oddly reminiscent, in its solemn self-abasement, of the farewell speech of King Arthur, though at the opposite pole of contrast in the homeliness of both language and scene. I have already spoken of a kind of epic dignity in Enoch Arden, and the poet himself uses the word "heroic." Enoch is, after all, in the line of England's greatness. He is one of those who, in conquering the sea, have achieved the greater conquest of their own souls; and, as Stopford Brooke finely puts it, Tennyson "brings all the mighty ocean into Enoch's chamber at the hour of death, to glorify him."*

"Woman, disturb me not now at the last,
But let me hold my purpose till I die.
Sit down again; mark me and understand,
While I have power to speak. I charge you now,
When you shall see her, tell her that I died
Blessing her, praying for her, loving her;
Save for the bar between us, loving her
As when she laid her head beside my own.

* The two final lines have seemed to some to drop, in contrast with this epic note, to unwarrantably tawdry and trivial things; why a *costly* funeral? Hence among his notes Tennyson left this comment: "All that poor Annie could do for him after he was gone. This is entirely introduced for her sake, and, in my opinion, quite necessary to the perfection of the poem."

And tell my daughter Annie, whom I saw
So like her mother, that my latest breath
Was spent in blessing her and praying for her.
And tell my son that I died blessing him.
And say to Philip that I bless'd him too;
He never meant us anything but good.
But if my children care to see me dead,
Who hardly knew me living, let them come,
I am their father; but she must not come,
For my dead face would vex her after-life.
And now there is but one of all my blood
Who will embrace me in the world-to-be.
This hair is his: she cut it off and gave it,
And I have borne it with me all these years,
And thought to bear it with me to my grave;
But now my mind is changed, for I shall see him,
My babe in bliss: wherefore when I am gone,
Take, give her this, for it may comfort her:
It will moreover be a token to her,
That I am he."

He ceased; and Miriam Lane
Made such a voluble answer promising all,
That once again he roll'd his eyes upon her
Repeating all he wish'd, and once again
She promised.

Then the third night after this,
While Enoch slumber'd motionless and pale,
And Miriam watch'd and dozed at intervals,
There came so loud a calling of the sea,
That all the houses in the haven rang.
He woke, he rose, he spread his arms abroad
Crying with a loud voice "A sail! a sail!
I am saved;" and so fell back and spoke no more.
So pass'd the strong heroic soul away.
And when they buried him the little port
Had seldom seen a costlier funeral.

V

INTERPRETATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

WE saw in the opening chapter that Tennyson, while for the most part isolating himself from the public life of his time in his outer experiences, was very far from living his life of thinker and poet apart from the march of science, politics, and philosophy. In this respect, as in so many, he contrasts interestingly with Browning; for Browning was to all appearances much more a man of the world than Tennyson, liking the gregarious life of the city, and the give and take of social intercourse, yet one can read almost all his works without being introduced to the specific problems of Victorian England. Tennyson's writings, on the other hand, form in large measure a commentary on the social and intellectual life of the mid-nineteenth century.

I. Politics and Social Progress

This does not mean that he wrote much verse on distinctively social themes. There are fewer than a dozen brief poems which can be called political, and their content is pretty well summed up in the one stanza which became most familiar:

> A land of settled government,
> A land of just and old renown,
> Where Freedom slowly broadens down
> From precedent to precedent.

This is Tennyson's England, on the political side, as in "The Palace of Art" he had sketched its most appealing aspect on the physical side—

> An English home—
> . . . all things in order stored,
> A haunt of ancient peace.

There is an almost monotonous iteration of the same note in every passage where he touched on the British constitution. The fact is, there is no better way to understand Tennyson's political creed than to study that of Burke, as expressed most fully in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. I do not know whether the poet was a close student of the great publicist; probably it was a matter of coincident training and thinking, rather than of teaching and learning. But it is precisely Burke's notion of freedom—a freedom developed very slowly, precedent by precedent, and characterized more by a reverence for the things that are than by joy in the power to change them—that he always sings. It is also Burke's dread of Revolution, and of the French type in particular, with its singular combination of rationalism and passion, which Tennyson feels almost as strongly as if he too had lived through its direst days. At the end of *The Princess* this is put into the mouth of one who, looking to-

ward the Channel and the imagined shores of France, contrasts his happy England, which preserves

> Some sense of duty, something of a faith,
> Some reverence for the laws ourselves have made,
> Some patient force to change them when we will,
> Some civic manhood firm against the crowd,

with the other land, where

> whiff! there comes a sudden heat,
> The gravest citizen seems to lose his head,
> The king is scared, the soldier will not fight,
> The little boys begin to shoot and stab,
> A kingdom topples over with a shriek
> Like an old woman, and down rolls the world.

It is true that the speaker here is not the poet himself, but "the Tory member's elder son," and that Tennyson represents the writer as taking a more moderate view:

> "Have patience," I replied, "ourselves are full
> Of social wrong; and maybe wildest dreams
> Are but the needful preludes of the truth."

But in *In Memoriam,* speaking for himself, he refers to "the blind hysterics of the Celt" and "the red fool-fury of the Seine;" and in general, wherever he touches on revolution, no Tory member's son could do it more disdainfully. "Regard gradation," he writes—that is, progress by slow degrees,

lest the soul
Of Discord race the rising wind;
A wind to puff your idol-fires,
And heap their ashes on the head,
To shame the boast so often made
That we are wiser than our sires.

This was early, in one of the poems of 1842. Forty years later, and more, in a poem called "Freedom," written for American readers, he reverts to the same theme and the same figure, with an allusion to those who "would raise a wind"—

Men loud against all forms of power—
Unfurnish'd brows, tempestuous tongues—
Expecting all things in an hour—
Brass mouths and iron lungs!

And in connection with this poem he left, among his manuscript notes, a quotation from Bacon evidently representative of his own conception of progress. "It were good that men in their innovations should follow the example of Time itself, which indeed innovateth greatly but quietly, and by degrees, scarce to be perceived. . . . It is good also not to try experiments in states except the necessity be urgent, or the utility evident." Again one is reminded of Burke, and his view of the British constitution: "Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; wherein, by the disposition of a stupendous

wisdom, molding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at one time, is never old, or middle-aged, or young, but, in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenor of perpetual decay, fall, renovation and progression."

Notice how Tennyson versifies another form of the same analogy, in one of the poems from which I have already quoted, "Love Thou Thy Land":

> For Nature also, cold and warm,
> And moist and dry, devising long,
> Thro' many agents making strong,
> Matures the individual form.
>
> Meet is it changes should control
> Our being, lest we rust in ease.
> We all are changed by still degrees,
> All but the basis of the soul.
>
> So let the change which comes be free
> To ingroove itself with that which flies.

And in another poem, called "The Statesman" (one which he withdrew from publication), he applies the doctrine to the type of leader which was being demanded by an age imperiled—in his view—by the chatter and wrangle of partisan parliamentary government:

> A noise of hands that disarrange
> The social engine! fears that waste
> The strength of men, lest overhaste
> Should fire the many wheels of change!

Ill fares a people passion-wrought,
A land of many days that cleaves
In two great halves, when each one leaves
The middle road of sober thought!

Not he that breaks the dams, but he
That thro' the channels of the state
Convoys the people's wish, is great;
His name is pure, his fame is free:

He cares, if ancient usage fade,
To shape, to settle, to repair,
With seasonable changes fair,
And innovation grade by grade:

Or, if the sense of most require
A precedent of larger scope,
Not deals in threats, but works with hope,
And lights at length on his desire:

Knowing those laws are just alone
That contemplate a mighty plan,
The frame, the mind, the soul of man,
Like one that cultivates his own.

He, seeing far an end sublime,
Contends, despising party-rage,
To hold the Spirit of the Age
Against the Spirit of the Time.

What is the significance of all this for Tennyson as poet? Chiefly, one must admit, a negative significance. It is as difficult for conservatism to take up its abode in the soul of poetry as it is easy for radicalism to do so, and this quite without reference

to the absolute merits of the two temperaments. We know what poetry means to a Shelley, piercing the very heavens for a vision of that which shall make all things new; we know what it means to the indignant young radicalism of a Browning, crying out against the "lost leader"—

> "Just for a handful of silver he left us!"

or to a Swinburne, forever chanting the dooms of tyrant kings. But what has it to do with this spirit of caution, not to say timidity, respecting the relation of past, present, and future? Poetry can not thrive on mere negation—on what is *not* believed, not dared, not to be hoped for—no matter how well warranted the negative position may be. Sometimes, as with Scott, the conservative's opportunity comes in merely celebrating the past, with no implications for present or future, one way or another. But this is not Tennyson's spirit: the past interests him chiefly with reference to present and future, and it would do him great injustice to imply that he did not have the forward look of his hero of "Locksley Hall."

Has he, then, no positive social message? Yes, though at times it seems absurdly tame and conventional, when he speaks from the standpoint of the typical gentlefolk of his age. In "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," after having uttered his fine youthful pronunciamento that

> The gardener Adam and his wife
> Smile at the claims of long descent,

his remedy for the ennui of the aristocracy is that they should look about for the usual opportunities to give alms to beggars at their gate, or, a little more systematically, should

> teach the orphan-boy to read,
> Or teach the orphan-girl to sew.

And in *The Princess,* describing an annual fête-day given by a country gentleman to all the people of the district, he represents the onlookers as observing benevolently:

> Why should not these great sirs
> Give up their parks some dozen times a year
> To let the people breathe?

A radical remedy, indeed, for the condition of the poor! Now these passages must not, of course, be taken too seriously, as if they set the limits to the poet's social ideas, or were not primarily mere representations of contemporary talk. But it must be admitted that, if he had been possessed of anything like the social sensitiveness of some of his contemporaries—Maurice, or Kingsley, or Ruskin—his very sense of humor would have made it impossible for him to write them. This was one side of Tennyson, the side which attached itself to the old rural aristocracy on the one hand and to royalty at Windsor on the other. But there was another side, the Tennyson of the keenest intellectual life of the period; and it was this intellectual life, rather than

social movements, which gave him his positive doctrine on civic affairs,—the doctrine of evolution, of progress certain and almost infinite in scope, but slow and not always direct or persistent. This view evidently seemed to him to harmonize at once his Burkian view of politics, his Christian faith, and his adherence to the new science. We have seen it implied in the earlier poems just cited, with their emphasis on "gradation," on progress by such "still degrees" as are observed in the processes of organic growth; and we have also seen it, in the preceding chapter, in the doctrines of the old man of Locksley Hall, who, though primarily an objective character, doubtless represents the poet's own view of progress as of a course which will

> Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward streaming curve,

and which will finally attain its goal only by the slow inpouring of divine love into humanity.

One aspect of society deeply impressed Tennyson in both the earlier and later periods,—the corroding power of gold. We have seen in both "Locksley Hall" and "Maud" that it was the sense of this evil which worked like a poison in the veins of youth; in "The Northern Farmer, New Style," it is represented as having done its work even with the once simple-hearted yeomanry. It was the growth of mercantile and manufacturing interests which especially drove this upon the attention of Tennyson's generation. Though he felt it with intensity, he

does not appear to have seen any remedy save in the long hope of a bettered human nature. We do not find anywhere in his poems hints of positive measures of social reconstruction; but when the New Year bells ring out the good omens of coming times, they chime insistently against "the feud of rich and poor," and

> Ring out the narrowing lust of gold.

The lines next to those just cited concern another of the great curses of mankind:

> Ring out the thousand wars of old,
> Ring in the thousand years of peace.

We are thus reminded of the relation of the poet's attitude toward war to his scorn of commercialism and greed. In "Maud," it will be remembered, the former evil was represented as in some sense a remedy for the latter. Here in the New Year poem, however, they are twin evils, doomed to the same destruction. All this is typical of Tennyson as a poet of the days of transition from one view of war to another,—days in which we still live, but in which it would seem that the point of view is changing with increasing rapidity. War is noble: it invokes the best of a man's spirit, in self-sacrifice and idealism; it wins glory for youth, is associated with the supreme efforts of manhood, and remains the most glowing memory of age. War is horrible: it is rooted in hate, lives only through blood and pain,

and is followed by all the specters of hunger, disease, widowhood and orphanhood. This is one of the paradoxes of poetry as it is a paradox of life. But once the darker side was kept out of common thought, in the interest of the brighter, as it can not be for us. Literature, then, must change with our attitude. So Tennyson is on one side a poet of war, not only in its immediate glories as they are associated with English valor and with the principle "Love thou thy land," but even to the point of representing it, as we have seen, to be so much better than commercialism as to become, at times, a positively redemptive factor. The soldier is so much better than the "smooth-faced snub-nosed rogue" behind "his counter and till"! (In the "Wellington Ode" he could pause, too, to make the death of the hero point the moral of "preparedness": "He bade you guard the sacred coasts.") On the other hand, he never ceased to view war as a passing stage of human evolution, to be supplanted by "parliaments of man," oceans filled with "warless isles," and the "larger heart" marking the reign of "the Christ that is to be."

In 1885, when he published the glowing "Charge of the Heavy Brigade," Tennyson took pains to make clear his attitude on this question, in an "Epilogue" wherein he imagined a reader (appropriately named Irene, or "Peace") as protesting:

> You praise, when you should blame
> The barbarism of wars.
> A juster epoch has begun,

To whom the poet replies:

You wrong me, passionate little friend.
I would that wars should cease,
I would the globe from end to end
Might sow and reap in peace,
And some new spirit o'erbear the old,
Or Trade refrain the powers
From war with kindly links of gold,
Or Love with wreaths of flowers.
Slav, Teuton, Kelt, I count them all
My friends and brother souls,
With all the peoples, great and small,
That wheel between the poles.
But since our mortal shadow, Ill,
To waste this earth began—
Perchance from some abuse of will
In worlds before the man
Involving ours—he needs must fight
To make true peace his own,
He needs must combat might with might,
Or might would rule alone.
And who loves War for War's own sake
Is fool, or crazed, or worse;
But let the patriot-soldier take
His meed of fame in verse;
Nay—tho' that realm were in the wrong
For which her warriors bleed,
It still were right to crown with song
The warrior's noble deed.

Another matter in relation to which Tennyson represents a transition era (and here too one from which we have scarcely emerged) is the Woman question. He did not live to see any very acute

phase of this develop in British society; but as early as 1847 he had made the acquaintance of a new type of young woman, who, contemplating the achievements of great queens of ancient times, would say:

> "There are thousands now
> Such women, but convention beats them down;
> It is but bringing up; no more than that:
> You men have done it: how I hate you all!"

More specifically, such a young woman might aspire, not to co-education—even her daring did not go so far as to dream of admission to the existing universities—but to found "a college like a man's," and teach her sex "all that men are taught." The speaker here is Lilia of *The Princess,* and her desire, blending with dreams of feudal castles, knights, and battles, is represented as giving rise to the story. It is the most extensive poem written by Tennyson in an unserious mood: he did everything he could—not being naturally given to such a turn—to make the thing whimsical, grotesque, unreal; and since he refuses in this way to treat the subject seriously, we can not in fairness go to the poem as a whole for his social views. Yet on the other hand we can not avoid its relation to them, especially since, at the close, he seems to drop the whimsical mood and to speak in some sense for himself.

The Princess Ida, though betrothed to a prince of a neighboring kingdom, renounces marriage and womanly restraints, and sets up a little empire of her own, within her father's domains, forbidding

men to enter it on pain of death. Here she and a corps of female professors conduct a university, wherein all established sciences are taught except anatomy, which is excluded because of the horrors of dissection. The distant prince, who has never seen his betrothed though he has always loved her in his dreams, sets out with two companions to win his way to her presence; and, having her father's permission to do so, enters the forbidden palace—all three men disguised as women students. For a time the fraud is concealed, but at length one of the prince's companions, stirred by wine at the banquet, reveals his sex, and the three are driven to flee for their lives. The prince is captured; but in the meantime his father, foreseeing his peril, has invaded the land with an army, and seized the father of the princess, whom he holds as hostage for the safety of his own son. It is presently determined that the issue shall be fought in a tourney, led on the princess's side by her brother Arac, on the other by the prince her betrothed. The defenders of the princess are victorious; nevertheless, Ida feels that her cause has met essential defeat, partly because the sanctity of her palace has been invaded, partly because there has been treachery in her own ranks, her dearest friend, the chief lecturer of the college, having been won to love one of the prince's companions. The gates are therefore thrown open to all, and the wounded warriors, both victorious and defeated, are brought in to be nursed to recovery; the princess herself, moved to pity by his almost

dead condition, devoting herself to the care of the prince. On his sick-bed he finally wins her love.

These are the outlines of the action of the poem, but I am far from having represented all the elements of its spirit. For one thing, there is a little child—daughter of the fair young widow, the princess's chief companion and colleague—who appears and reappears throughout the narrative, and who Tennyson said is to be viewed as the link connecting the various parts; this child's function seems to be to draw out the humaner, and especially the suppressed feminine and maternal, qualities from the women who have supposed they could put them aside. It is an old, old theme—this effort of one sex to do without the other; Shakespeare had satirized the converse attempt, on the part of men, in *Love's Labour's Lost.* The comic aspects of it are easy to see and to make appealing, and it is these, as we have noticed, that Tennyson chose chiefly to emphasize. He takes, then, for the most part a dispassionate, objective attitude, letting the limitations of all sides of the case appear by turns. For instance, we have the absurdly conservative old king, the prince's father, whose doctrine is:

> "Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
> Man for the sword and for the needle she:
> Man with the head and woman with the heart:
> Man to command and woman to obey;
> All else confusion."

Or, still more brutally:

> "Man is the hunter; woman is his game:
> The sleek and shining creatures of the chase,
> We hunt them for the beauty of their skins;
> They love us for it, and we ride them down."

Set over against this, the revolutionary spirit of the princess seems more than justified. The prince himself, opposing the obstinacy of both extremes, knows that only Love can win a victory which will be worth his while. So, if we seek a really serious solution of the tale, it is the old one, familiar in Tennyson's poetry, as in life; the social problem is at bottom a problem of individuals, and for them it is solved by love. When at length the lips of the two lovers met, all

> Her falser self slipped from her like a robe,
> And left her woman.

As to further implications, we must not press too curiously. Are we to understand that it was a "false self" that led Ida to desire the same education as her brothers? that there is a real sting in the quizzical picture of the college halls where:

> on the lecture slate
> The circle rounded under female hands
> With flawless demonstration; followed then
> A classic lecture, rich in sentiment,
> With scraps of thunderous epic lilted out
> By violet-hooded doctors;

And of other rooms where the discourse was on:

> The star, the bird, the fish, the shell, the flower,
> Electric, chemic laws, and all the rest,
> And whatsoever can be taught and known?

These scenes were very amusing to the male spectators who had broken in; they were amusing to the readers of 1847; but they have ceased to be in themselves amusing to-day. And even for Tennyson, who appears at times to speak through the prince, they seem not to have been wholly grotesque. The claim to "more breadth of culture" for woman is admitted. The lover's sympathies lead him to tell his bigoted father that he has made the common mistake of supposing that all women are alike, whereas they "have as many differences as we." They are, however, alike in being man's moral superiors—

> Not like the piebald miscellany, man,
> Bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire,
> But whole and one: and take them all-in-all,
> Were we ourselves but half as good, as kind,
> As truthful, much that Ida claims as right
> Had ne'er been mooted, but as frankly theirs
> As dues of Nature.

If, then, there is a moral to the deliberately fantastic tale, it is not that Ida erred in seeking the knowledge that men sought, but that she erred in seeking it through isolation from men, and also (as she herself confesses) in seeking "less for truth than

power in knowledge;"—an interpretation which is surely not altogether without significance for the feminism of to-day. The closing scene of *The Princess,* if we tried to view it on the plane of reality and reason as a story, would give rise to many queries: it was an ill match, after all, one would say; nor had the wooer-prince shown any such qualities of mind or will as to justify him in lecturing his sweetheart on the relations of the sexes. But it is not to be judged as a reasonable story; it is a "medley," in the poet's own word, or a lovely poetic fantasy, wherein, after all the riot of whimsical adventure, we enter the quiet of the room where the wounded prince lies convalescent, and seem to hear in his voice the voice of the poet, disclosing certain fundamental truths concerning man and woman which this moment of the lovers' union may be thought to typify. Tennyson incidentally weaves into the passage a portrait of his mother (in the lines beginning "Yet was there one thro' whom"), as representing the type of feminine character toward which the impulsively radical princess had been unwittingly striving.

"Blame not thyself too much," I said, "nor blame
Too much the sons of men and barbarous laws;
These were the rough ways of the world till now.
Henceforth thou hast a helper, me, that know
The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink
Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or free:
For she that out of Lethe scales with man
The shining steps of Nature, shares with man

His nights, his days, moves with him to one goal,
Stays all the fair young planet in her hands—
If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,
How shall men grow? but work no more alone!
Our place is much: as far as in us lies
We two will serve them both in aiding her—
Will clear away the parasitic forms
That seem to keep her up but drag her down—
Will leave her space to burgeon out of all
Within her—let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn and be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.
For woman is not undevelop'd man,
But diverse: could we make her as the man,
Sweet Love were slain: his dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;
Till at the last she set herself to man,
Like perfect music unto noble words;
And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,
Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their powers,
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,
Self-reverent each and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other even as those who love.
Then comes the statelier Eden back to men:
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm:
Then springs the crowning race of human-kind.
May these things be!"
Sighing she spoke, "I fear
They will not."

"Dear, but let us type them now
In our own lives, and this proud watchword rest
Of equal; seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal: each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-cell'd heart, beating, with one full stroke,
Life." And again sighing she spoke: "A dream
That once was mine! what woman taught you this?"

"Alone," I said, "from earlier than I know,
Immersed in rich foreshadowings of the world,
I loved the woman: he, that doth not, lives
A drowning life, besotted in sweet self,
Or pines in sad experience worse than death,
Or keeps his wing'd affections clipp'd with crime:
Yet was there one thro' whom I loved her, one
Not learned, save in gracious household ways,
Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
No angel, but a dearer being, all dipp'd
In angel instincts, breathing Paradise,
Interpreter between the gods and men,
Who look'd all native to her place, and yet
On tiptoe seem'd to touch upon a sphere
Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce
With such a mother! faith in woman-kind
Sway'd to her from their orbits as they moved,
And girdled her with music. Happy he
With such a mother! faith in womankind
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
Comes easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall
He shall not blind his soul with clay."

"But I,"
Said Ida, tremulously, "so all unlike—
It seems you love to cheat yourself with words:

This mother is your model. I have heard
Of your strange doubts: they well might be: I seem
A mockery to my own self. Never, Prince;
You cannot love me."
"Nay but thee," I said
'From yearlong poring on thy pictured eyes,
Ere seen I loved, and loved thee seen, and saw
Thee woman thro' the crust of iron moods
That mask'd thee from men's reverence up, and forced
Sweet love on pranks of saucy boyhood: now,
Giv'n back to life, to life indeed, thro' thee,
Indeed I love: the new day comes, the light
Dearer for night, as dearer thou for faults
Lived over: lift thine eyes; my doubts are dead,
My haunting sense of hollow shows: the change,
This truthful change in thee has kill'd it. Dear,
Look up, and let thy nature strike on mine,
Like yonder morning on the blind half-world;
Approach and fear not; breathe upon my brows;
In that fine air I tremble, all the past
Melts mist-like into this bright hour, and this
Is morn to more, and all the rich to-come
Reels, as the golden Autumn woodland reels
Athwart the smoke of burning weeds. Forgive me,
I waste my heart in signs: let be. My bride,
My wife, my life. O we will walk this world,
Yoked in all exercise of noble end,
And so thro' those dark gates across the wild
That no man knows. Indeed I love thee: come,
Yield thyself up: my hopes and thine are one:
Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself;
Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me."

II. Philosophy and Religion

We turn now to Tennyson's poetic interpretations of contemporary thought in the field of philosophy

and religion, where his work is much richer and more representative than in problems of politics and social progress. Nothing, indeed, endeared him so much to his own generation as the realization that he was voicing their spiritual experiences in these difficult regions. The historian Froude, writing to Leslie Stephen, said that he considered Tennyson to have "this relative superiority even to Shakespeare, that he speaks the thoughts and speaks to the perplexities and misgivings of his own age."

The problems of philosophic thought came into Tennyson's consciousness in two principal ways: in the first place, with his reflections on his personal experiences, such as come to every man and bring him into the presence of questions concerning his relation to the universe; and in the second place, with his interest in the progress of modern science. The latter is the more conspicuous source of his thinking. I have noted in an earlier chapter how the *facts* of life, as viewed by keen observers,—facts not merely of the poetic sort, but of the scientific, —were always fascinating to him, and how he sought to make use of them in his poetry, not indulging himself in the notion that poetic truth might be indifferent to truth of other kinds. He dipped, in his own studies, into one after another of the natural sciences, and allusions to the details of physiology, geology, astronomy, and the rest, are to be found everywhere in his writings; not, as is usually the case with Browning, for the sake of their merely curious character, or as the grotesque content of

pedantic minds, but rather as the natural material of thought on the part of a modern man.* In his youthful period, when he had been fascinated by certain details of embryology, he introduced them in such lines as—

> Before the little ducts began
> To feed thy bones with lime, and ran
> Their course, till thou wert also man;

and in his mature years he sought to express the great oneness of knowledge which the philosophy of science had intimated, in the familiar lines to the flower:

> If I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

But the very fact that Tennyson took his science so seriously, and could not, like some poets, view it as the business of trivial or dull minds, subjected him to its depressing as well as its exalting side. And here he was, of course, most sensitively responsive to the thought of his time. How the new science often made humanity appear insignificant and mean, and idealism and faith appear to be outworn, is a story that has often been told. Of course it was not a really new thing that the materialist and

* Thus the philosopher Sidgwick wrote: "For [Tennyson] the physical world is always the world as known to us through physical science: the scientific view of it dominates his thoughts about it; and his general acceptance of this view is real and sincere, even when he utters the intensest feeling of its inadequacy to satisfy our deepest needs."

the spiritualist type of mind should be at odds with each other, or that there should seem to be an absolute dilemma in the choice between visions and facts. It has happened in every age, from that of Plato to that of Darwin. But it came with a new, and sometimes a frightfully dark and divisive front, to the mid-nineteenth century in England. The late Stopford Brooke, in speaking of this period, writes: "It was a time when every belief was challenged, when society had almost ceased to hope or believe in the future even of man on the earth, and when political and social ideas which prophesied the advent of a more unselfish world were laughed at as unpractical. . . . Few then kept their faith, whether in God and man, or in man alone; few were bold enough to believe that the confusion was not the prelude to decay but the turmoil that precedes a new birth." This is a decided exaggeration; there is ample evidence that plenty of people in Great Britain maintained their faith in both God and man, at the time of which Brooke is speaking; but the very fact that the era made that sort of impression on his memory is the significant point. Now in what appeared to be a war between "geology and faith," or, at another moment, biology and faith, Tennyson was not the man either to shut the conflict from his mind or to take sides readily against either party. One can see evidences of one aspect of his feeling in his occasionally sinister allusions to the new science—the "sad astrology" of *Maud,* which has turned the stars to

> Pitiless, passionless eyes,
> Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand
> His nothingness into man;

or the image, in "Parnassus," of two dreadful shapes that loom over the very fountain of the Muses—

> These are Astronomy and Geology, terrible Muses!

But on the other hand we have abundant evidence that he was loyal to science, and not content until he found, or thought he found, a way out without being false to either kind of truth.

The earliest important poem representing this spiritual conflict is "The Two Voices," written about 1833 but not published till 1844. In this case the immediate stimulus is not from current thought but in the personal sorrow, Arthur Hallam's death, which led Tennyson to question the meaning and value of life. One of the Two Voices is that of Skepticism, bidding him renounce life; the other that of Faith, bidding him pursue a "hidden hope." It must be admitted that if we look at the poem as a whole, or with special reference to its conclusion, it is likely to seem rather tame and unsatisfying; for Faith says exceedingly little, and the reasons why the poet gives heed to her voice appear to be, not the things she says, but the fact that a beautiful Sabbath morning, with pealing church-bells, the view of happy neighbors, and abundant birds and blossoms, made the voice of doubt to seem

faint and barren. This may be quite true to experience, but it is not philosophically helpful, since neither poet nor reader can always be sure of lovely Sabbath mornings and melodious bells and birds. The real value and content of "The Two Voices" are found in the dialogue between the poet himself and his doubts. The "barren voice" reminds him that the progress of nature and the world goes on with no reference to the individual; when he is dead and buried, souls will vainly "yearn for light" as they have always done. Not only so, but all apparent progress is delusive: the further one ascends, the more heights are still unmastered.

> "Thou hast not gained a real height,
> Nor art thou nearer to the light,
> Because the scale is infinite.
>
> "'Twere better not to breathe or speak,
> Than cry for strength, remaining weak,
> And seem to find, but still to seek."

As for the aspirations of youth,—its willingness to labor for good causes, perhaps to die for them,—they are only among the physical phenomena of that period of life:

> "Yea!" said the voice, "thy dream was good,
> While thou abodest in the bud.
> It was the stirring of the blood."

Even if the youthful zeal should persist, and life accumulate a store of achievements, all were vain.

"Thou hadst not between death and birth
Dissolved the riddle of the earth.
So were thy labour little-worth. . . .

"If straight thy track, or if oblique,
Thou know'st not. Shadows thou dost strike,
Embracing cloud, Ixion-like;

"And owning but a little more
Than beasts, abidest lame and poor,
Calling thyself a little lower

"Than angels. Cease to wail and brawl!
Why inch by inch to darkness crawl?
There is one remedy for all."

Yet the poet, listening, and consciously unable to refute what the voice contends, remains unconvinced. These things are so—failure, vanity, death; but other things are so also.

I cannot hide that some have striven,
Achieving calm, to whom was given
The joy that mixes man with Heaven:

Who, rowing hard against the stream,
Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,
And did not dream it was a dream;

But heard, by secret transport led,
Ev'n in the charnels of the dead,
The murmur of the fountain-head.

Even the inexorable grave does not convince man

that it is the end; and is there no meaning in this fact?

Why, if man rot in dreamless ease,
Should that plain fact, as taught by these,
Not make him sure that he shall cease?

Who forged that other influence,
That heat of inward evidence,
By which he doubts against the sense? . . .

Here sits he shaping wings to fly:
His heart forebodes a mystery:
He names the name Eternity.

That type of Perfect in his mind
In Nature can he nowhere find.
He sows himself on every wind.

He seems to hear a Heavenly Friend,
And thro' thick veils to apprehend
A labour working to an end.

The end and the beginning vex
His reason: many things perplex,
With motions, checks, and counterchecks.

He knows a baseness in his blood
At such strange war with something good,
He may not do the thing he would.

Heaven opens inward, chasms yawn,
Vast images in glimmering dawn,
Half shown, are broken and withdrawn.

Ah! sure within him and without,
Could his dark wisdom find it out,
There must be answer to his doubt.

The final argument of the voice of doubt is summed up in the thesis "that to begin implies an end": as the poet had no existence when his father was a child, so he has no right to look forward to one hereafter. To which Tennyson proposes the notion of a possible pre-existence, of which the memory gives us no clear hint, but which may none the less be a part of the soul's story,—a view, never argued definitely but never wholly laid aside, which recurs in his poetry to the very end of his life.

As here we find in trances, men
Forget the dream that happens then,
Until they fall in trance again.

So might we, if our state were such
As one before, remember much,
For those two likes might meet and touch.

But, if I lapsed from nobler place,
Some legend of a fallen race
Alone might hint of my disgrace;

Some vague emotion of delight
In gazing up an Alpine height,
Some yearning toward the lamps of night;

Or if thro' lower lives I came—
Tho' all experience past became
Consolidate in mind and frame—

I might forget my weaker lot;
For is not our first year forgot?
The haunts of memory echo not.

The main series of lyrics is divided, in some sense, into four portions, the three points of division being associated with three Christmas days—the holiday seasons of the three years following Arthur Hallam's death. It is possible to see some progress of thought and feeling, as one passes from one of these sections to another, though different readers interpret this progress variously, and we can not here follow out the whole course of its development. In general, the movement is from despair to increasing faith; and Tennyson himself spoke of the poem as a kind of Divine Comedy, beginning with a funeral and ending with a marriage—the epilogue being concerned with the wedding-day of his sister. In the earlier sections the theme is the union of love and sorrow which begets poetry, a union so complete that the writer feels that he must not let go of grief lest love go with it. But his personal grief widens to something more universal, from his very reflection on the trite condolences of those who remind him that "loss is common to the race." So Hamlet's mother, one remembers, bade him remember that death is "common," and it is perhaps with an echo of this in mind that Tennyson says,

> That loss is common would not make
> My own less bitter, rather more.

Life is full of death. But chiefly, at this period, his thoughts linger about the ship and the voyage by which the body of his dead friend is being brought back from Italy to England. The most

beautiful of these lyrics to the vessel is set in the calm beauty of an autumn morning:

XI

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only thro' the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on these dews that drench the furze,
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
These leaves that redden to the fall;
And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

After the burial the poet wanders, in imagination, near the grave in the little church at Clevedon, by the River Severn. The Severn is a tidal river, and the Wye, one of its tributaries, is filled by the rising flood in its lower reaches, so that its

babbling stream becomes silent through very fulness. This Tennyson makes a symbol of his own feeling and his speech:

XIX

The Danube to the Severn gave
The darken'd heart that beat no more;
They laid him by the pleasant shore,
And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills;
The salt sea-water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hush'd nor moved along,
And hush'd my deepest grief of all,
When fill'd with tears that cannot fall,
I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again
Is vocal in its wooded walls;
My deeper anguish also falls,
And I can speak a little then.

In still another lyric he defends himself, after a fashion, from the charge of filling his song with a private sorrow, in days when great things are abroad. There are stirrings of rebellious popular feeling (the Chartist movement, perhaps); there are great conquests on the part of science—Neptune, for instance, had lately been discovered. The answer makes no pretense to reasoning; bereaved love is its own defense.

XXI

I sing to him that rests below,
And since the grasses round me wave,
I take the grasses of the grave,
And make them pipes whereon to blow.

The traveler hears me now and then,
And sometimes harshly will he speak:
"This fellow would make weakness weak,
And melt the waxen hearts of men."

Another answers, "Let him be,
He loves to make parade of pain,
That with his piping he may gain
The praise that comes to constancy."

A third is wroth: "Is this an hour
For private sorrow's barren song,
When more and more the people throng
The chairs and thrones of civil power?

"A time to sicken and to swoon,
When Science reaches forth her arms
To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon?"

Behold, ye speak an idle thing:
Ye never knew the sacred dust:
I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing:

And one is glad; her note is gay,
For now her little ones have ranged;
And one is sad; her note is changed,
Because her brood is stol'n away.

The first division of the work closes with the theme with which it began: love, even with grief, is too precious to lose. The poet now dreads but one thing, that the lapse of time may make him more indifferent; if so, he asks only that Death may come to shroud him from his own scorn. For those who do not know sorrow because they do not know love, like those who do not suffer the pains of captivity merely because they have not known liberty, are not truly blest.

XXVII

I envy not in any moods
The captive void of noble rage,
The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer woods:

I envy not the beast that takes
His license in the field of time,
Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
The heart that never plighted troth
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

Here we pause, and enter the second division with the coming of the Christmas season. The

scene is the old Tennyson home at Somersby, surrounded by hamlets whose churches chime out the coming of the sacred night with a four-fold peal that echoes the angels' song in its four syllables, "Peace and Goodwill." But what of the interior of the house? How shall the memory of the dead affect the family festival? The answer is found in two songs which the poet describes: the first is one only of sad resignation, but the second is of hope, of confidence that the dead do not die. It is here, then, that we seem to pass into the higher mood of the new section.

XXVIII

The time draws near the birth of Christ:
The moon is hid; the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,
From far and near, on mead and moor,
Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound:

Each voice four changes on the wind,
That now dilate, and now decrease,
Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,
Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,
I almost wish'd no more to wake,
And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again:

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controll'd me when a boy;
They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,
The merry merry bells of Yule.

XXX

With trembling fingers did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
A rainy cloud possess'd the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
We gambol'd, making vain pretence
Of gladness, with an awful sense
Of one mute Shadow watching all.

We paused: the winds were in the beech:
We heard them sweep the winter land;
And in a circle hand-in-hand
Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang;
We sung, tho' every eye was dim,
A merry song we sang with him
Last year: impetuously we sang:

We ceased: a gentler feeling crept
Upon us: surely rest is meet:
"They rest," we said, "their sleep is sweet,"
And silence follow'd, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range;
Once more we sang: "They do not die
Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
Nor change to us, although they change;

"Rapt from the fickle and the frail
With gather'd power, yet the same,
Pierces the keen seraphic flame
From orb to orb, from veil to veil."

Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,
Draw forth the cheerful day from night:
O Father, touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born.

What follows lingers on the new thought of the deathlessness of the spirit. The resurrection of Lazarus is recalled. But most of all, the very vanity, the awful emptiness of life viewed as merely mortal, seems to the poet to mark such a view as impossible.

XXXIV

My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is;

This round of green, this orb of flame,
Fantastic beauty; such as lurks
In some wild poet, when he works
Without a conscience or anaim.

What then were God to such as I?
'Twere hardly worth my while to choose
Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die;

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
Like birds the charming serpent draws,
To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease.

Somewhat later he tries to figure his relationship to his departed friend as like that of a family to a bride who has left the home to find a larger usefulness elsewhere. But the imperfection of the analogy instantly saddens him: from the bride there are constant tidings coming, from the dead no word. Then comes a fear of quite another sort: suppose, as seems more than possible, the dead soul has gone on growing, rising ever "from high to higher," as on earth; how, then, can the old kinship be renewed even if they are to meet again? So thinking,

> oft when sundown skirts the moor
> An inner trouble I behold,
> A spectral doubt which makes me cold,
> That I shall be thy mate no more,
>
> Tho' following with an upward mind
> The wonders that have come to thee,
> Thro' all the secular to-be,
> But evermore a life behind.

On the other hand there is the possibility that in the world to come the lost friend may be his teacher:

> And what delights can equal those
> That stir the spirit's inner deeps,
> When one that loves but knows not, reaps
> A truth from one that loves and knows?

Other meditations seek in other ways for some analogy which may explain the mystery of life in fresh terms. Perhaps death is like sleep, and his friend awaits him in some "still garden of the

souls," to be awakened at a "spiritual prime." Or perhaps in the world of the dead there is to be no memory of life on earth; yet this notion is rejected, for it would be strange that life here should grow always in the direction of increasingly vivid personality, and man nevertheless be left to "learn himself anew" in the next stage of existence. Far more likely that

> no shade can last
> In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
> But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
> The eternal landscape of the past.

The view is also to be considered that personality will disappear altogether, each soul falling to remerge "in the general Soul." But this belief, "as vague as all unsweet," is also put aside:

> Eternal form shall still divide
> The eternal soul from all beside.

Just here Tennyson inserts a parenthetical section (XLVIII), in case any should suppose that he offers these meditations as serious arguments on the "doubts and answers here proposed." His sorrow, he says, is not seeking to analyze and prove, but only to let fancy play with her questions in such a way as, at any rate, to make doubt a "vassal unto love."

We now come suddenly upon an address to the spirit of the lost friend, showing the welling up of a desire for his presence.

L

Be near me when my light is low,
When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
Is rack'd with pangs that conquer trust;
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
And men the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife,
And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.

This prayer is followed at once by the query, Do we really desire that the dead "should still be near us at our side?" Can we bear the penetration of their clear eyes? The answer is, yes; they have wisdom to make divine allowance for our faults—"the dead shall look me through and through."

The poet's thought now passes from the evil in himself to the problem of evil in the large, as it had formerly passed from personal sorrow to universal sorrow. The result is a group of three lyrics which may be viewed as the heart of this section of the poem, wherein we come once more upon the

struggle of faith as affected by contemporary thought. Nature has been besought for aid in solving the central mystery of life,—whether she reveals a divinely ordered progress, and in particular whether she shows any care for the individual. The answer is far from consoling: Nature seems to care only for types, not for the personal life;—nay, when we look more closely, even the type has a lifetime short enough from the standpoint of geology. If we ask her about spirit, she answers that for her it means only breath. If we allege, as some have done, that at any rate Love is the law that links all creation, she shows us that her kingdom is one of ravening tooth and claw quite as truly as of love. Here, then, none of the vaguely soothing impressions of nature poets or sentimental thinkers will avail. The final answer is, Mystery; behold, we know not anything. But again the very awfulness, the incredibility, of the vanishing into nothingness of human hopes, brings a kind of confirmation of "the larger hope."

LIV

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
    Will be the final goal of ill,
    To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
    That not one life shall be destroy'd,
    Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream: but what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.

LV

The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave,
Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life;

That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

LVI

"So careful of the type?" but no.
From scarpèd cliff and quarried stone
She cries, "A thousand types are gone:
I care for nothing, all shall go.

"Thou makest thine appeal to me:
I bring to life, I bring to death:
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more." And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law—
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? a monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him.

O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

There are a number of other meditations during the cycle of this year, but they can not be said to mark any real progress. The section ends with a new iteration of the poet's intention to go on singing the story of his love and grief, no matter if both he and his friend miss the meed of earthly fame.

To breathe my loss is more than fame,
To utter love more sweet than praise.

Then comes the second Christmas. The old festivities are kept; there is now no visible token of sorrow; hence the haunting fear recurs that love is waning. "O last regret, regret can die!" But the answer is, regret is not really dead, it is only that "with long use her tears are dry." The new section of the poem is marked by a greater calmness and resignation than had been attained hitherto; although the poet's mind lingers on what might have been had his friend remained with him, it is not with bitterness. Memories of their days at college and at Hallam's house can now be enjoyed without too keen an admixture of pain. A certain spring morning seems to gather into itself this aspect of the period, as the autumn morning had done for an earlier era; it is perhaps the loveliest lyric in the entire work.

LXXXVI

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
Of evening over brake and bloom
And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below
Thro' all the dewy-tassell'd wood,
And shadowing down the horned flood
In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh
The full new life that feeds thy breath
Throughout my frame, till Doubt and Death,
Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
On leagues of odour streaming far,
To where in yonder orient star
A hundred spirits whisper "Peace."

Despite this peace, however, there is a desire, rather growing than diminishing, to hold some communication with the lost friend. At one moment the poet cries that his only undying complaint against death is that

He put our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak.

At another he ponders on the possibility of a vision of the friend, but rejects it, knowing that if it came he might count it "but the canker of the brain;" yet the thought will not down. It changes to a de-

sire, not for the visible form, but for the very spirit of the dead.

> No visual shade of some one lost,
> But he, the spirit himself, may come
> Where all the nerve of sense is numb;
> Spirit to spirit, ghost to ghost. . . .
>
> Descend, and touch, and enter; hear
> The wish too strong for words to name;
> That in this blindness of the frame
> My ghost may feel that thine is near.

In the following lyric he considers the conditions of such a meeting, and in the next the desire is, in a sense, fulfilled. The scene is a summer night, when, as often in so northern a latitude as England, there comes no complete loss of the power of sunlight from the sky, but the "dim lights" of West and East are mingled. Left alone at length in the garden, Tennyson (and here we may freely speak of him rather than of the vaguer "poet," for the experience was a real one) re-reads the letters of his lost friend and meditates on them until he is caught into a kind of trance where—as he had reasoned it—there is no vision of forms, but a sense of "the living soul" flashed on his. In the first writing of these verses they read *"his* living soul"; but Tennyson wished to avoid defining the experience as concerned with the person of his friend, and therefore changed the phrase to the vaguer form, saying, however, as his son tells us, "Of course the greater Soul may include the less." When the trance breaks,

doubt (as usual) comes in to question it; words fail to express it, or even memory to recall it with accuracy; and the familiar dawn breaks. The skill and beauty with which all this is related are utterly beyond praise.

XCIV

How pure at heart and sound in head,
With what divine affections bold
Should be the man whose thought would hold
An hour's communion with the dead.

In vain shalt thou, or any, call
The spirits from their golden day,
Except, like them, thou too canst say,
My spirit is at peace with all.

They haunt the silence of the breast,
Imaginations calm and fair,
The memory like a cloudless air,
The conscience as a sea at rest:

But when the heart is full of din,
And doubt beside the portal waits,
They can but listen at the gates,
And hear the household jar within.

XCV

By night we linger'd on the lawn,
For underfoot the herb was dry;
And genial warmth; and o'er the sky
The silvery haze of summer drawn;

And calm that let the tapers burn
Unwavering: not a cricket chirr'd:
The brook alone far-off was heard,
And on the board the fluttering urn:

And bats went round in fragrant skies,
And wheel'd or lit the filmy shapes
That haunt the dusk, with ermine capes
And woolly breasts and beaded eyes;

While now we sang old songs that peal'd
From knoll to knoll, where, couch'd at ease,
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field.

But when those others, one by one,
Withdrew themselves from me and night,
And in the house light after light
Went out, and I was all alone,

A hunger seized my heart; I read
Of that glad year which once had been,
In those fall'n leaves which kept their green,
The noble letters of the dead:

And strangely on the silence broke
The silent-speaking words, and strange
Was love's dumb cry defying change
To test his worth; and strangely spoke

The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell
On doubts that drive the coward back,
And keen thro' wordy snares to track
Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,
The dead man touch'd me from the past,
And all at once it seem'd at last
The living soul was flash'd on mine,

And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd
About empyreal heights of thought,
And came on that which is, and caught
The deep pulsations of the world,

Æonian music measuring out
The steps of Time—the shocks of Chance—
The blows of Death. At length my trance
Was cancell'd, stricken thro' with doubt.

Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame
In matter-moulded forms of speech,
Or ev'n for intellect to reach
Thro' memory that which I became:

Till now the doubtful dusk reveal'd
The knolls once more where, couch'd at ease,
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field:

And suck'd from out the distant gloom
A breeze began to tumble o'er
The large leaves of the sycamore,
And fluctuate all the still perfume,

And gathering freshlier overhead,
Rock'd the full-foliaged elms, and swung
The heavy-folded rose, and flung
The lilies to and fro, and said

"The dawn, the dawn," and died away;
And East and West, without a breath,
Mix'd their dim lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day.

Here the narrative wholly breaks off, and the succeeding poem is a separate meditation on the old theme of doubt and faith. But now the subject is connected in a new way with Arthur Hallam himself (as a note of the poet's makes certain): he too had known doubt, not running away from it, but conquering. There is a fine imaginative figure here: at first the friend's lyre was out of tune, but he neither rejected it nor became content with the imperfection; patiently he sounded the strings, tuning them as occasion offered, till "at last he beat his music out."

XCVI

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touch'd a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true:

Perplex'd in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them: thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own;
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinai's peaks of old,
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

The conclusion to this section of the poem is almost purely personal, having to do with the removal of the Tennysons from the old home at Somersby to High Beech (which did not actually occur until 1837), and the emotions associated with it. On the last night in the house of many memories the poet dreams of a voyage in which he comes upon his dead friend, and they move on together "toward a crimson cloud." Then comes the end of the year, the third Christmas finding the family in the new home, "in lands where not a memory strays." For this reason the festival is a quiet one, and grief has no occasion to protest the jollity which had been at odds with it in the past. The poet's mind seems now turned from personal matters toward those universal: looking out on the stars of Christmas night, he bids them

Run out your measured arcs, and lead
The closing cycle rich in good.

And when the bells of New Year chime, there is not a thought of his own petty sorrows and joys, but

the song is all for the great cycle that is to bring in a new age of fulfilment of human hopes. This is the poem which has become, and is likely to remain, the New Year song of the whole English-speaking world.

CVI

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

In the sections that follow this we hear a good deal more of Arthur Hallam, but almost nothing more of the poet's merely personal loss. He portrays the character of his friend now, it would seem, rather for the world's sake than his own. When the spring-time comes, and there is some tendency for the old regret to stir and reawaken like the flowers, it is nevertheless unable to bring back the old sadness. There is

Less yearning for the friendship fled
Than some strong bond which is to be.

And for every hour that holds the friends apart, the delight of a coming meeting accrues a hundredfold. Thus meditating, on the unending cycles of time, the poet considers the place of man in those cycles, and is led to one of his most characteristic utterances on the spiritual significance of what science has taught of the long story of humanity.

CXVIII

Contemplate all this work of Time,
The giant labouring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends. They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branch'd from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;
Or, crown'd with attributes of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipp'd in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

A little later it is geology, one might say, rather than biology, which has again set his thoughts upon the theme of the changefulness, the perpetual evanescence, of all that we know in this present world. There is nevertheless, he declares, a region of permanence in the spirit. And from this point he mounts to one of the great heights of *In Memoriam,*

as he reviews his whole past effort to find the infinite Unknown—whether to be named He, They, or All. The search in nature, as we have seen, has failed; the old effort to see divine love in "eagle's wing or insect's eye" has proved inadequate; and the reason, spinning its petty cobwebs, has proved equally futile. But an inner experience, which in the early days of "The Two Voices" he spoke of as that of others rather than of himself, he has now made his own. His real self ("what I am") has beheld the Infinite Reality—"What is, and no man understands."

CXXIII

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars hath been
The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dream, and hold it true;
For tho' my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.

CXXIV

That which we dare invoke to bless;
Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
He, They, One, All; within, without;
The Power in darkness whom we guess;

I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
Nor thro' the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun:

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice, "Believe no more,"
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd, "I have felt."

No, like a child in doubt and fear:
But that blind clamour made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again
What is, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach thro' nature, moulding men.

In a poem that follows close upon these another step is taken by the poet's imaginative faith. The universe is now viewed as the kingdom whose lord is Love, and through all the kingdom run couriers bringing messages from absent friend to friend; even though one is on the frontier, if he rouses himself and listens in the night, he will

hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

We come now to the final address, in three lyrics, to Arthur Hallam and to the living will or soul of man of which his great soul was a type. Here the poet rises by a mystical flight to a conception to which many poets have attained, according to which the object of their love is made one with all that is most desired in the whole world of thought and nature. Plato taught the doctrine, centuries ago, —that love for an individual was but a step toward love of the eternal Idea of beauty. Shakespeare told his beloved:

> Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts
> Which I, by lacking, have supposed dead.

Shelley, meditating on the dead Keats, who for him was a symbol of translated youth and beauty, cried:

> He is made one with Nature: there is heard
> His voice in all her music, from the moan
> Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird;
> He is a presence to be felt and known
> In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
> Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
> Which has withdrawn his being to its own.

And Tennyson, in like manner, is led to "mingle all the world" with the soul of his friend, and to feel him like "some diffusive power" in all the loveliness of nature. Hence, by a kind of new Platonism, he identifies his aspiration toward reunion with him and that toward reunion with the eternal Source of humanity. But this, unlike the vaguer

mysticism of the Orient, of Plato, of Shelley, still has place for personality. The "living will" does not yield itself, or submerge itself in the Whole, like stream and ocean, but endures all vicissitudes; the individual man finds for himself a relation to a personal God, who works with him toward great ends.

CXXIX

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
So far, so near in woe and weal;
O loved the most, when most I feel
There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown; human, divine;
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
Loved deeplier, darklier understood;
Behold, I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee.

CXXX

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
But tho' I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less:

My love involves the love before;
My love is vaster passion now;
Tho' mix'd with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

CXXXI

O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto him that hears,
A cry above the conquer'd years
To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

From all this it is evident that *In Memoriam* is far from being a single, continuously progressive composition, even in the sense in which these terms might be applied to the *Idylls of the King*. In the survey I have given, it doubtless has an appearance of greater unity than one would discover in reading it from beginning to end. Yet unity of a certain sort it clearly possesses. As a bird may circle about

a central object, never out of sight of it, yet never progressing along a straight line, so Tennyson may be said to have circled about his great sorrow and the problem of sorrow, not seeking or claiming to reach a real destination by the processes of consecutive thinking, but more and more advanced toward the elevation of a serene faith. If one remembers this, some of the objections which have been raised to the work, as professedly but not truly philosophical, disappear. Other objectors are disposed to reproach, not the philosophy of the poem, but the wearisome plaintiveness—the almost whining tone—of the earlier portions. Here at any rate the author shows some sympathy with them, for in the epilogue, commenting on the growth of his mind and spirit during the years since the work was begun, he speaks of his songs as now appearing like "echoes out of weaker times." And in the prologue he calls the lyrics "confusions," "wild and wandering cries." Yet to many readers this weaker, plaintive element seems only the true record of one side of sorrow, characteristic even of virile minds.

The theme of human immortality, discussed so fully in this work in connection with his bereavement, Tennyson never ceased to dwell upon. In the "Wellington Ode" it is incidental, but is treated much in the manner of *In Memoriam*. As it had seemed impossible that Arthur Hallam was not finding new opportunities for his great powers in the life beyond life, so of Wellington

we doubt not that for one so true
There must be other nobler work to do
Than when he fought at Waterloo.

(It is interesting to note that Matthew Arnold applied the same reasoning to the same subject, in his "Rugby Chapel," written in memory of his father:

Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labour-house vast
Of being, is practiced that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!)

Again, as the sense of an abiding spiritual essence was declared, in *In Memoriam,* to overtop the consciousness of the changing lands and waters of earth, so in the Ode—

For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill
And break the shore, and evermore
Make and break, and work their will;
Tho' world on world in myriad myriads roll
Round us, each with different powers,
And other forms of life than ours,
What know we greater than the soul?

Some years later Tennyson devoted to the subject a little poem called "Wages," in which he represents the power to *go on* as the only possible reward for the best things in humanity.

WAGES

Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea—
Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—
Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory she:
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

The wages of sin is death: if the wages of Virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

Sometimes, especially in his later years, there is a touch of pettishness in the poet's allusions to what seemed to him to be a growing disposition to deny the immortal nature of the soul. There was, perhaps, no greater disposition to do so than had troubled himself in former days; but old age always forgets something of the doubts of youth, and Tennyson truly portrayed its attitude in the old man of the second "Locksley Hall," whom we have found reproaching his grandson for his willingness to "crown Death as lord of all." Speaking for himself, about the same time, in the poem called "Vastness," he takes a similar tone:

Spring and Summer and Autumn and Winter, and all these old revolutions of earth;
All new-old revolutions of empire—change of the tide—what is all of it worth?

What the philosophies, all the sciences, poesy, varying voices
of prayer?
All that is noblest, all that is basest, all that is filthy with all
that is fair?

What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our own corpse-
coffins at last,
Swallowed in Vastness, lost in Silence, drown'd in the deeps
of a meaningless Past?

What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or a moment's
anger of bees in their hive?—
Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love him for ever: the
dead are not dead but alive.

If we look at passages like this from the standpoint of cold reason, they are open to the objection that the poet "doth protest too much." He has repeatedly told us that life to him seems not worth living without the promise of another life; is he then merely declaring for immortality because he wants it so badly? It is a familiar fallacy to assume that a thing must be true because it is desirable, and it may seem the height of arrogant, self-centered obstinacy to declare, "Don't talk of annihilation! My love and my hope must not be destroyed!" We may admit that there is a certain weakness here in Tennyson's attitude, and also that the very lack of serenity in his manner of stating it suggests that he felt that weakness and was annoyed by it. The late Leslie Stephen, in part a loyal admirer of Tennyson's verse, declared that his position in *In Memoriam* and kindred poems

seemed "like a man clinging to a spar left floating after a shipwreck, knowing that it will not support him, and yet never able to make up his mind to strike out and take his chance of sinking or swimming." There is an interesting contrast here with the spirit of Browning, who, though in some ways further from orthodox Christian beliefs than Tennyson, shows in his poems a far more unclouded, unhesitating confidence in the heritage of immortality.

On the other hand there are some things which may be said in defense of the Tennysonian line of thought. For one thing, if we put it on the plane of mere reason, the poet might say to us that the very existence of this insatiable desire for eternity has an evidential value of its own; so that, when he makes much of the mere desire, and of the feeling that without this thing life is meaningless, he is using an argument which many thinkers have found to be valid,—that an intelligible, significant universe is the only kind of a universe we have a right to assume. But the real defense is not to be made on the plane of argument, but on that of poetry—of the imagination. To poetry the imagination is what faith is to religion: it makes daring assumptions, even revelations, of its own, and maintains that so long as they form a vital and consistent part of the inner life they are as real as the things proved by the processes of the outer life. Thus Wordsworth announces, "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;" Shelley,

> The splendors of the firmament of time
> May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;

and Browning makes Abt Vogler declare that "All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist," supporting his announcement by the reflection—

> The rest may reason, and welcome; 'tis we musicians know!

If Tennyson erred, then, it was not in giving insufficient proof, but in seeming to be trying to offer proof at all. He has the poet's right to see and to declare; what he sees and says will be accepted by those who live on the same plane, or in the same ideal world. His finest and most valid utterances on the mysteries of existence are those in which he speaks most affirmatively, in the simple manner of *one who knows,* as Emerson and Browning commonly do, though this is not to deny that some readers may value the utterances the more for knowing of the doubts through which he passed. Of this high affirmative character is the final creed of "Crossing the Bar," or, again, the splendid conclusion to the little-known poem "Parnassus," which sounds curiously like Browning speaking on the same theme:

> If the lips were touched with fire from off a pure Pierian altar,
> Tho' their music here be mortal need the singer greatly care?
> Other songs for other worlds! the fire within him would not falter;
> Let the golden Iliad vanish—Homer here is Homer there.

Another topic which we have seen in *In Memoriam,* and which reappears in every period of Tennyson's poetry, is that of human evolution. Here, even in his young manhood, and before the world at large was taking much note of this tendency, he brought together the more advanced speculations of science, sociology, and religion. "It was part of the originality of Tennyson," said Andrew Lang, "as a philosophic poet, that he had brooded from boyhood on these early theories of evolution, in an age when they were practically unknown to the literary, and were not patronised by the scientific world." Not for nearly a decade after *In Memoriam* did the special doctrines of Darwin and Wallace set the whole world to discussing the origins of man, but we have seen the poet's vivid account of the theme, in the lyric beginning "Contemplate all this work of Time," with its famous corollary,

> Move upward, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die.

Indeed we are told that some of these sections on evolution were familiar to Tennyson's friends before the publication, in 1844, of Robert Chambers's epoch-making *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation.* Our study of *In Memoriam* has made it clear what was the special value of the modern doctrine to the poet's religious thinking: it helped to establish the essential dualism of man, which he had portrayed so emphatically in "The Two Voices," and which tended to make faith indifferent to what-

ever might be the facts respecting our physical nature. Late in life he set forth this conception anew, in the now familiar terms of evolutionary biology, in a poem called "By an Evolutionist." It is one of the most striking examples of the capacity of poetry to take up, for its own purposes, the problems of contemporary thought, and should be read with some memory of Browning's similar images in "Rabbi Ben Ezra"—

"A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale;"

"A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a god though in the germ."

BY AN EVOLUTIONIST

The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man,
  And the man said "Am I your debtor?"
And the Lord—"Not yet: but make it as clean as you can,
  And then I will let you a better."

If my body come from brutes, my soul uncertain, or a fable,
  Why not bask amid the senses while the sun of morning shines,
I, the finer brute rejoicing in my hounds, and in my stable,
  Youth and Health, and birth and wealth, and choice of women and of wines?

What hast thou done for me, grim Old Age, save breaking my bones on the rack?
  Would I had pass'd in the morning that looks so bright from afar!

OLD AGE

Done for thee? starved the wild beast that was link'd with
thee eighty years back.
Less weight now for the ladder-of-heaven that hangs on a
star.

If my body come from brutes, tho' somewhat finer than their
own,
I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal voice be
mute?
No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the throne,
Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule thy province of the
brute.

I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in
the Past,
Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low
desire,
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet at last
As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a
height that is higher.

Yet once more, in his final volume of 1892, Tennyson reverts to the theme in two little poems called "The Dawn" and "The Making of Man,"—poems not important in themselves, but keenly interesting because of the vivid survival, in the writer's advanced age, of the old keynote: "Forward, forward let us range!" For the first of them the impulse is given by profound discontent with the humanity of to-day:

Red of the dawn!
Is it turning a fainter red? so be it, but when shall we lay
The ghost of the Brute that is walking and haunting us yet,
and be free?

In the other it is said of Man:

All about him shadow still, but, while the races flower and fade,
Prophet eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining on the shade.

In conclusion, we should look at two or three poems, unconnected with any outstanding movement of thought, which are yet of some interest as illustrating Tennyson's use of poetry for purposes partly philosophical. Of these the best known is "The Higher Pantheism," read at a meeting of the Metaphysical Society in 1869. This is a little philosophic meditation in which Tennyson enters into the mystical doctrine of certain familiar schools, yet carries with him notions which he thinks of as correcting rather than contradicting their teaching. The pantheist thinks of God as the World-Soul, as the only real existence, whereof what seem to us to be individual persons are but elements, like drops in a continuous ocean. In this conception there is much to which Tennyson's own thought was akin, for he always held that spirit is more real than matter, and that the human spirit ever seeks after the Eternal One. Once he said to Frederick Locker-Lampson, as they stood gazing upon an Alpine view: "Perhaps this earth, and all that is on it—storms, mountains, cataracts, the sun and the skies—are the Almighty: in fact, that such is our petty nature, we can not see Him, but we see His shadow, as it were, a distorted shadow." (Compare with this the third line from the last, in the poem, with its image

of the "straight staff bent in a pool.") On the other hand he clings unremittingly, as we have seen in *In Memoriam,* to the notion of individual human personality, as well as to that of the personality of God. Hence, in "The Higher Pantheism," while he queries whether all that we seem to see may not be but a vision of the Unknown One,* he still conceives of this One as separate from—not including—that which can feel "I am I." The two personalities, human and divine, can each know the other, and can communicate; yet one of them perceives the other only "through a glass darkly"; its eye and ear are not made for the divine reality; broken lights (the old figure), stifled splendors, are all that can reach it from the glory of the Other.

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

Is not the Vision He? tho' He be not that which He seems?
Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?

Dark is the world to thee: thyself art the reason why;
For is He not all but that which has power to feel "I am I"?

* Compare Arthur's words in "The Holy Grail," page 157.

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy doom
Making Him broken gleams, and a stifled splendour and gloom.

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

God is law, say the wise; O Soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

Law is God, say some: no God at all, says the fool;
For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see;
But if we could see and hear this Vision—were it not He?

It may be questioned whether so compact a statement of difficult thinking as this, which requires as many words to interpret it as there are in the poem itself, is greatly to the advantage of either philosophy or poetry. So, at any rate, it seemed to Swinburne, who parodied the poem in some once famous lines, beginning,

> One who is not, we see; but one, whom we see not, is;
> Surely this is not that: but that is assuredly this.

On the other hand, to those whose own spiritual processes have taken a course similar to Tennyson's, there are passages in "The Higher Pantheism" as precious as anything he wrote.

Another poem, more purely personal in origin, dates from the birth of the poet's eldest son, though it remained unfinished and unpublished until 1880 —the "De Profundis." There is perhaps no moment in the experience of a thoughtful man in which he is more likely to ponder on the whole meaning and character of human life, than the hour of the birth of his first child. So it is that in this poem, truly personal and lyrical though it is, Tennyson may be said to sum up his philosophy more completely than in any of the more didactic pieces. It is composed of two addresses to the new-born babe, in both of which the course of his life is viewed as passing "de profundis," out of the deep, through the little arc of earthly life, back to the great deep again,—an echo, one might say, of the mystic saying with which the career of King Arthur was associated, "From the great deep to the great deep he goes." But in the first address the child is a merely human creature; the deep from which he comes is the vast ocean of matter, in which, "for a million æons," there has been potentially contained all that shall be developed from it ("all that was to be in all that was"). His form is that of his parents; his life is to be a mortal course like theirs, and to pass at length, with "slowly dying power," to the destination where he and they shall at last be still. In the second address, on the other hand, the child is a spirit; the deep from which he comes is that of a universe "whereof our world is

but the bounding shore," and wherein human life arises from the will of the divine Spirit. His human form is a kind of veil in which his real self is "half lost," and at the same time a sign of his personality, wondrously separated off from the "whole World-self;" his life is to be primarily the movement of a Will, with power to choose and act upon the world, and his course is to be toward a long series of cyclic existences, "from death to death through life and life," ever drawing nearer the infinite One. I repeat that there is nothing in Tennyson's poetry which so wonderfully blends his profounder meditations with his personal feeling. One of his friends, Wilfrid Ward, has related how the poet read the "De Profundis" for him, near the end of his life, with indescribable impressiveness. "He began quietly, and read the concluding lines of the first 'greeting,' with the brief description of a peaceful old age and death, from the human standpoint, with a very tender pathos. Then he gathered force, and his voice deepened as the greeting to the immortal soul of the man was read. . . . Never can I forget the change of voice, the change of manner, as Lord Tennyson passed from the first greeting, with its purely human thoughts, to the second, so full of awe at the conception of the world behind the veil and the moral nature of man; an awe which seemed to culminate when he paused before the word 'spirit' in the seventh line and then gave it in deeper and more piercing tones: 'Out of the deep —*Spirit*—out of the deep.' "

DE PROFUNDIS:

THE TWO GREETINGS

I

Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
Where all that was to be, in all that was,
Whirl'd for a million æons thro' the vast
Waste dawn of multitudinous-eddying light—
Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
Thro' all this changing world of changeless law,
And every phase of ever-heightening life,
And nine long months of antenatal gloom,
With this last moon, this crescent—her dark orb
Touch'd with earth's light—thou comest, darling boy;
Our own; a babe in a lineament and limb
Perfect, and prophet of the perfect man;
Whose face and form are hers and mine in one,
Indissolubly married like our love;
Live, and be happy in thyself, and serve
This mortal race thy kin so well, that men
May bless thee as we bless thee, O young life
Breaking with laughter from the dark; and may
The fated channel where thy motion lives
Be prosperously shaped, and sway thy course
Along the years of haste and random youth
Unshatter'd; then full-current thro' full man;
And last in kindly curves, with gentlest fall,
By quiet fields, a slowly-dying power,
To that last deep where we and thou are still.

II

Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
From that great deep, before our world begins,
Whereon the Spirit of God moves as he will—
Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,

From that true world within the world we see,
Whereof our world is but the bounding shore—
Out of the deep, Spirit, out of the deep,
With this ninth moon, that sends the hidden sun
Down yon dark sea, thou comest, darling boy.
For in the world, which is not ours, They said
"Let us make man," and that which should be man,
From that one light no man can look upon,
Drew to this shore lit by the suns and moons
And all the shadows. O dear Spirit half-lost
In thine own shadow and this fleshly sign
That thou art thou—who wailest being born
And banish'd into mystery, and the pain
Of this divisible-indivisible world
Among the numerable-innumerable
Sun, sun, and sun, thro' finite-infinite space
In finite-infinite Time—our mortal veil
And shatter'd phantom of that infinite One,
Who made thee unconceivably Thyself
Out of His whole World-self and all in all—
Live thou! and of the grain and husk, the grape
And ivyberry, choose; and still depart
From death to death thro' life and life, and find
Nearer and ever nearer Him, who wrought
Not matter, nor the finite-infinite,
But this main-miracle, that thou art thou,
With power on thine own act and on the world.

There is one other poem, too long for full reading here, which again represents very interestingly, if somewhat didactically, the religious thinking of Tennyson in his later period. It is called "The Ancient Sage," and is based on a kind of dialogue between a young skeptic and an aged seer. The skeptic is something of a lyrist, and has indited a

poem in which he sings the death of faith, partly in the manner of the voice of doubt in "The Two Voices," partly in the spirit of Omar Khayyam:

> But man to-day is fancy's fool
> As man hath ever been;
> The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule
> Were never heard or seen. . . .
>
> Yet wine and laughter, friends! and set
> The lamps alight, and call
> For golden music, and forget
> The darkness of the pall.

As the wise man reads the manuscript of this lyric, and comments discursively on its substance, we catch echoes of one or another of the poet's doctrines as we have already become familiar with them. To the allegation that the "nameless Power" has never been heard or seen, he replies by distinguishing knowledge and insight,—by finding faith essentially superior to proof.

> If thou would'st hear the Nameless, and wilt dive
> Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
> There, brooding by the central altar, thou
> May'st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
> By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
> As if thou knewest, tho' thou canst not know;
> For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
> That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there
> But never yet hath dipp'd into the abysm,
> The Abysm of all Abysms, beneath, within,
> The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth,
> And in the million-millionth of a grain
> Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,
> And ever vanishing, never vanishes. . . .

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one:
Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no
Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay, my son,
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!

Still more significant, and also decidedly more poetical, is a passage concerning the actual experience of spiritual insight, with special reference to surviving impressions of a past behind the earthly life. We have seen this touched on in "The Two Voices" and elsewhere. It also occurs in a late lyric which has not been noticed, called "Far, Far Away," where the poet questions whether a certain "mystic pain or joy" is not

a breath
From some fair dawn beyond the doors of death.

And we know that it was a real portion of Tennyson's own experience. So also with the inner sense of the mortal self reaching into the Infinite, as we had it in King Arthur's account of his spiritual life at the close of "The Holy Grail": this too was autobiographic for the poet. To Mrs. Bradley he once said, according to a passage in her diary: "There are moments when the flesh is nothing to

me, when I feel and know the flesh to be vision, God and the spiritual the only real and true." And again he wrote in a note: "At times I have possessed the power of making my individuality as it were dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility." One means of reaching this state, as Professor Tyndall related that Tennyson told him, was a certain mystical dwelling upon his own name —a process referred to by the Ancient Sage, where he speaks of "the word that is the symbol of myself." The passage is in reply to one of the lines in the lyric of unbelief, in which human creatures are called "worms and maggots of to-day."

> To-day? but what of yesterday? for oft
> On me, when boy, there came what then I call'd,
> Who knew no books and no philosophies,
> In my boy-phrase "The Passion of the Past."
> The first gray streak of earliest summer-dawn,
> The last long stripe of waning crimson gloom,
> As if the late and early were but one—
> A height, a broken grange, a grove, a flower
> Had murmurs "Lost and gone and lost and gone!"
> A breath, a whisper—some divine farewell—
> Desolate sweetness—far and far away—
> What had he loved, what had he lost, the boy?
> I know not and I speak of what has been.
>
> And more, my son! for more than once when I
> Sat all alone, revolving in myself
> The word that is the symbol of myself,

> The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
> And pass'd into the Nameless, as a cloud
> Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs, the limbs
> Were strange not mine—and yet no shade of doubt,
> But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self
> The gain of such large life as, match'd with ours,
> Were sun to spark—unshadowable in words,
> Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.

In all these ways, then, Tennyson undertook to bring together the experiences which he had himself undergone as a mystic, and to harmonize them with that other side of himself which was reverential toward both natural science and intellectual independence. Or, from another standpoint we may say that he sought to unite whatever he had kept of the distinctively Christian faith of his race and age with that which he had as the result of personal strivings of mind and spirit. One sees from this why his religious position is sometimes spoken of as a futile compromise, like his attitude of compromise between law and liberty in government, or tradition and progress in such social questions as feminism. There is this element of compromise in his poetry, and it doubtless impairs its poetical power, which I have already said is at its best in pure affirmation. But it is not true that his religious position was reached by compromising methods, if by this we mean the effort to keep the peace with thinkers on all sides. Tennyson had, in fact, rather surprisingly little interest in the Christian tradition *as such,* and was not at all concerned to be orthodox.

He was less of a Christian dogmatist than Browning; he makes less than his great contemporary of the Incarnation as a solution of the problem of faith, and could never have entered so sympathetically into the theology of the Fourth Gospel as did the writer of "An Epistle of Karshish" and "A Death in the Desert." Deeply concerned for the Christian doctrine of immortality, he did not approach it from the standpoint of revelation. He wanted all the facts, both of the material and the spiritual realm; the charge of compromise is really based on this dualism. Neither did he blink the difference between knowledge and faith; but he thought it absolutely consistent to follow all human knowledge to the furthest bound to which it can carry us, and then to throw out the soundings of faith into the region where knowledge ceases to avail.

VI

TENNYSON, THE VICTORIANS, AND OURSELVES

I HAVE said on an earlier page that there are some ways in which the Victorian era, of which Tennyson is the veritable poet laureate, now seems further away from us of the twentieth century than other ages far more remote according to the calendar. The English language has not changed noticeably since the time of *In Memoriam* and the *Idylls of the King;* no glossaries are needed in order to catch the verbal meanings of the poet; but certain of the methods of our thinking, as well as much of its subject-matter, have changed in a still more difficult way,—one which implies the need of something like a glossary of the spirit. On the other hand, if the poetry of Tennyson is truly great, it will prove to have the elements, both of form and substance, which endure as in some sense vital for every succeeding generation. For poetry is essentially more permanent than prose; it deals less with the surface of life, and more with the inner reality, and it hands down its traditions more conservatively, not seeking so quickly as prose to speak the language of the moment.

This very conservatism, however, is one of the

things of which our generation is characteristically impatient. I have touched on this briefly, in connection with the style of such professedly realistic poems as "Dora" and "Enoch Arden." The language of these poems is in a kind of common denominator of poetic speech, which would have been valid and natural, within the necessary limits of changing vocabulary, for almost any period between Shakespeare's time and the end of the nineteenth century. Just now, however, it seems somewhat antiquated and formal because of the repeated efforts toward absolute fidelity to fact which have been made in recent years. In like manner, the blank verse in which these and many other of Tennyson's poems are written is a traditional form, passing as rhythmically current coinage at any time between Shakespeare's and ours, but it now seems to many persons to have lost a part of its value merely because it has been current for so long. New rhythms, new speech, for new men and women—so runs our thought. In so far as this thought gives stimulus to youth, helps to make poetry seem a real part of life, and encourages us to expect that it will have something of its own to do for each new experience of the race, it is a good for which we should be duly thankful. But in so far as it blinds us to the value of our inherited goods, or leads us to suppose that in order to be ourselves we must break with the tested forms in which other generations have expressed themselves, it is likely to lead astray. There is no reason, for example, why we should not re-

joice in a rhythm which is really new, unless it is offered to us merely *because* it is new—in which case it is almost certain to be as short-lived as the latest ragtime song. But there is abundant reason why we should maintain our love for a rhythm which is old, provided, like the great blank verse type of Tennyson and his predecessors, it has proved a precious possession of the race. We should count it a bad symptom if it begins to sound old-fashioned to us,—to be no longer a vital stimulus to our feeling; for in that case we are in danger of breaking deplorably with a rich past. I have already said that Tennyson was himself so eager and dexterous an experimenter in rhythmic form that one will have to go far to find a really rhythmic mode which he did not touch, and in touching adorn. He was the most resourceful and the soundest teacher of poetics to the younger poets of any English writer since Shelley, and there is not the slightest sign that his equal in this respect has yet appeared among his successors. (Swinburne is not to be excepted for a moment; for though he was a brilliant composer of meters and a merciless critic of the meters of others, both his invention and his taste were far below Tennyson's.) Hence we may well resolve—if there should be any need of such a resolution—to learn to love his rhythmic voice, for a poet's rhythm is a kind of vocal quality of his personality that survives him, and to count such a love a sure touchstone for our taste in this kind.

There are still deeper ways than this suspicion of

traditional form, in which our generation has tended to break with the Victorians. One of them is difficult to define: it may be partly expressed by saying that the Victorians seem more *simple-minded* than we. Of course this does not necessarily mean that they were really so; all people of earlier periods seem comparatively naïve and childlike to those upon whom the ends of the world are come, and it is extremely difficult to believe that one's great-grandfather was ever a man of the world. There is no reason to suppose that the psychology of the race has changed in a generation; it is simply a matter of habits of expression. When a Victorian was in love he was more likely to show it than we, even to talk about it; when he was confronted by approaching death, he did not scruple to reveal that it moved him deeply; if he had hopes of a better world hereafter, he did not think it vulgar or hypocritical to allude to them. The enthusiasms of the individual were rather more normally expressed than ours; we normally suppress enthusiasm, unless it is of a character to find expression in the mass—in a crowd at a football game. So our literature follows suit: it speaks plainly of all that is touched by a spirit of satire, or can be treated with a suggestion of an under side of laughter bordering the serious, but it is as reticent about its personal idealism (not so much so when the idealism is *social*)—its passions lifted high by love, death, or religion—as Victorian literature was reticent about sweat-shops, feminism, and sexual immorality. Somehow we are timid of

displaying that "high seriousness" which Matthew Arnold viewed as an essential of all great art,—to fear that we shall not seem fully matured, altogether wise, if we abandon the understanding of all sides of experience; hence, even when confronted with beauty or passion, we are likely to insist on the elements of the absurd on the obverse side. Of this quality of "high seriousness," of course, a certain simplicity is an important part; the artist who possesses it is capable of taking a point of view much like a child's. Very different is the type of art which represents adult mixed moods, intellectually self-conscious, seeking grotesque effects for the sake of the richer experience they imply, and fond of mingling the comic with the serious because this shows that one is not abandoning himself childishly to a big, simple, inclusive emotion. From this standpoint it sometimes seems to us as if the Victorians represented that uninteresting state of mankind before the fall, whereas we have eaten of the tree of knowledge. We shall realize this if we try to imagine Tennyson writing one of the plays of Ibsen, perhaps the dominant literary spirit of the early twentieth century, or Ibsen composing "The Passing of Arthur" or "Crossing the Bar."

Now these contrasts are not contrasts of good and bad. The satiric or grotesque in art does not have to be condemned because we admire the simply serious, nor the simply serious because we admire the satiric or grotesque. (Browning, like Shakespeare, was one of the happy men who have been

able to pass from the one mood to the other instantaneously, and to be sincere and effective in both.) But it is only fair to say that if we had to choose between them we should not be wise to choose the mood more characteristic of our time, because it is after all not the one to live with, to eat and drink of, either in the moments of daily duty or in those highest moments to which poetry and religion characteristically minister. The old passions remain—love, and spiritual aspiration, and awe of death; and the highest art has always treated them with something of the simple seriousness of the child. One might say, Except ye become as little children, ye can not enter into the kingdom of the Beautiful. So it is well for us to realize here also, while we may enjoy our more *knowing* literature with all the zest we please, that we had better not lose touch with the other spirit, for which the poetry of Tennyson typically stands.

Another characteristic of our time which tends to make us suspicious of the Victorians is closely connected with that I have just discussed: it is our dislike for the didactic. The Victorians seem to us to have been exceedingly, not to say painfully, fond of emphasizing the moral significance of whatever they treated, even in art. We find a zest in recalling the story of one of them, an estimable lady, who, after attending a performance of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra,* summed up her impressions by saying, "How different from the home life of our beloved Queen!" We detect a somewhat similar

flavor in Tennyson's dedicatory allusions to the moral and domestic qualities of the deceased prince consort. We find that the novelists of the period seem to have been forever concerned with some duty or other, as distinguished from the free and joyful creation of free and joyful characters. Duty is all very well, and moral problems are no doubt hard to escape, but it seems to us that art, at least, should be kept from being made dark and heavy by their intrusion. Hence we tend to divide what is said and written into two great classes: the utterances of teachers, lecturers, and preachers are in the one, those of happy people and artists in the other. This distinction raises many interesting questions, which I can not pursue here; but we may note in passing that our generation is in a decided minority in viewing the didactic element as foreign to the highest types of literature. Indeed, so far as England is concerned, it is the first generation to pursue the opposite policy on a large scale. I do not know that any of Shakespeare's plays was written to point a moral, but we all know that he was so fond of pointing one by the way that it has been alleged that a code of ethics on almost any aspect of life could be drawn up by collecting his numberless dicta. Spenser, Jonson, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Thomson, Gray, Cowper, Blake, Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron—one has only to run over the names to recall that every one of them was frankly and irrepressibly didactic in a large portion of his poetry. Keats is the one important exception, and

there are signs that he would not have remained so had he lived a little longer. If, therefore, we reject as unpoetical that which is laden with serious thought on moral problems, we shall be forced to another notable break with the past. Leslie Stephen has some interesting observations in this connection, suggested by Matthew Arnold's allegation that fine poetry must be concerned with the "criticism of life." We are now told, he says, that it is wrong "for a poet, or a novelist, or a painter to take any moral consideration into account, and therefore to talk of poetry as destined to do for us much that philosophy and religion used to do is, of course, manifestly absurd. . . . Meanwhile, it is my belief that nobody is the better in any department of life or literature for being a fool or a brute: and least of all in poetry. I cannot think that a man is disqualified for poetry either by thinking more deeply than others or by having a keener perception of (I hope I may join the two words) moral beauty." There can be no doubt that this view represents accurately that of Tennyson. In his own time, his son tells us, he expressed a fear "that the English were beginning to forget what was, in Voltaire's words, the glory of English literature—'No nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation.'"

It is almost needless to say that the Victorian side of this question is not in conflict with the fact that there is normally a marked difference between the treatment of moral ideas by a poet and that by a

professor or a preacher. On this point there is no quarrel. We should all agree with William Watson when, in a fine epigram, he declares that poetry is neither truth nor wisdom: but, he adds, it is

> the rose
> Upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eyes.

It proceeds by the imagination rather than the reason, and with a certain fidelity to beauty from first to last. That Tennyson commonly pursued the methods of the imagination and was faithful to beauty, there can be no question. What we are disposed to question, influenced by the time-spirit, is his disposition to pass from the purely personal or lyrical to the general moral aspect of his theme. He does so because it is the moral aspect which warms and stirs his feeling. Thus he will turn aside from the sentiments awakened by the death of Wellington to discourse on "the path of duty":

> He that walks it, only thirsting
> For the right, and learns to deaden
> Love of self, before his journey closes,
> He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
> Into glossy purples, which outredden
> All voluptuous garden-roses.

And this image, despite its intrinsic beauty, offends the taste of some because it does not exist for its own sake but for that of the moral idea which stimulated the poet to present it. In Tennyson's early

period he wrote not a little verse which served only as the record of fugitive impressions of the senses —"imagist" we might call it now—but his interest in imaginative *thinking* rapidly deepened, and in his late periods he wrote some poems which exist almost wholly for thought's sake, though they are never wholly unbeautiful. But the great bulk of his poetry is devoted to the union of substantial thinking (particularly on moral themes) and imaginative beauty, and in this, as I have said, it is like the bulk of all the important poetry in the English tongue.

Not a few of our contemporaries, however, seem to believe that the actual moral content of the Victorian literature, and of Tennyson's poetry in particular, is primitive or obsolete. For some, indeed, this is to put the case very mildly. Thus I find an American critic declaring recently, "The hypocritical sentimentality of Tennyson's Arthurian ideal lay upon Mid-Victorian England like a blight." If one were to reply in kind, he might call this either a wicked lie or a harmless absurdity, according to his mood; and it would be easy to show that it could never have been made by any one who was really acquainted with the character of Tennyson or the content of the *Idylls of the King.* But the fact that it could be made at all, and be printed in a respectable journal, is worth trying to understand. Here we must turn back to our earlier study of the *Idylls,* and recall how we noticed a certain priggishness or solemn egotism (not in the least hypocritical, to be sure) in the personality of the king, which

is clearly much more repellent to our taste than it was to that of the Victorians. Even so, it would be going too far to infer that all England was blighted by the fact that Tennyson did not wholly succeed in the attempt to present a perfect and yet human hero. Was he hypocritical in assuming that such a character as Arthur's could be attained by every man? Hardly, for we saw that he sets forth, almost with pessimism, the difficulty of the Arthurian ideal. Is it, then, the ideal itself which is offensive? Here we come to the crux of the matter. Some light is thrown on it by another critic, this time of Great Britain, who has observed that the Victorians were characterized by an extraordinary "blinking of facts concerning the appetite of love." Strange, how every young generation makes the same discoveries as its predecessors, and then wonders why the fathers were so blind! Fancy any one seriously reading the *Idylls,* and supposing that the generation they represent shut its eyes to the more sinister aspects of sex! No, the question comes back to their ideal; and we have seen, for Tennyson at any rate, what that ideal was.

The fact is, the Victorians, in what is sometimes called their "timid domestic morality" or their "conspiracy of silence," were doing precisely what civilization has been doing through the slow strivings of many an age. They knew the basic facts concerning the relations of the sexes; no generation has been ignorant of them, or has succeeded in forgetting them if it tried; but the first generation that

grappled seriously with the problem of "moving upward, working out the beast," caught a glimpse of the possibility of transmuting what was at first a biological fact into something quite as much alive but wholly different in its nature and effects. Every new generation, nay, every individual, had to learn this for himself, finding within himself elemental strivings that linked him with all living things and at the same time were touched miraculously by the upward reach; and, if he was so happy as to find the way, he came at length to understand the fusion of these various elements in that experience for which his race was learning to reserve the word "love." Meantime society, in order to assist the individual to this idealizing process, developed its art, its literature, as well as its common life and daily speech, on kindred lines. It threw more and more into the background the elemental sub-structure of sex, not as something to be discarded, but as something which was to have lasting significance only in relation to the super-structure. Or, if I may change the figure, without tearing up the roots it bade art devote itself to the flower. This work having been accomplished in some degree, by the painful toil of centuries, there nevertheless arises at intervals some popinjay, claiming to have discovered for the first time the true nature of the sexual passion, and undertaking to teach it to an impoverished world. Once again Nature must say in rejoinder, "So hot, my little sir?" and seek to show how much more she has to teach than those have

guessed who have run off with only the old first page of her primer.

The Germanic race in particular, and the Anglo-Saxon branch of that in certain characteristic ways, learned its lesson fairly well, and made of monogamy—of the lasting love of one woman by one man—an institution not merely of social but of both artistic and spiritual significance. We have seen how the *Idylls of the King* is one of the landmarks of this process. Its peculiar blend of romance and allegory may not speak the language of our time; we may have to rewrite some of the material in other terms, in order to get the full effect of reality of which we are now so fond; but if we find ourselves out of touch with the essential ethics of Tennyson's work, it is again a sign of a serious break with our past.

All this has to do with personal morality; but we are now more interested in the morality of society, and the very emphasis which the Victorian placed on individual righteousness, as distinguished from the conduct of men toward one another in the mass, is likely to seem to us entirely out of proportion. The Victorian, we feel, was desirous of professing that his life was clean and his soul was saved, but was indifferent whether he was doing anything more for the problem of poverty than sending baskets of food to the nearest cottages; the man of the twentieth century is willing to be thought eager for social improvement, but does not wish to appear too anxious about his personal morality or the state of

his soul. Now for this new communal feeling of our time I have admitted that Tennyson has comparatively little to say. For him (as some will have it even now) morality is primarily a personal matter, and his attitude toward social progress we have seen was one destined soon to seem old-fashioned. There is one large segment, then, of our twentieth-century ethics with which his poetry has little to do. But poetry, after all, is bound to be three-fourths concerned with personal issues.

It would seem, then, that the matters which have led the present generation to lose touch with Tennyson as a representative poet of our race are not altogether to our credit. There is, of course, something to be said on the other side. The most valid objections to Tennyson's art concern his style, which tends always toward a beautiful circumlocution. It does not conceal the fact, but it invites us to view the fact through what Lockhart called (in the case of "Œnone") a "luxuriant trellis-work." I have pointed out more than once how the special taste of the present age of poetry is leading us as far as possible away from this manner. I have also admitted that Tennyson's discussions of philosophic and religious themes were so closely associated with the special intellectual problems of his time, instead of being centered on matters revealed solely by the poetic insight, that portions of his work must tend to become obsolete just so far as the progress of science and philosophy brings us to new positions and new issues. These things are the risks incurred

by any poet who represents in large decree a distinctive age.

If we seek to estimate the essential values of Tennyson's personality,—of his mind as distinguished from his art,—the change of temper from his generation to ours again affects our judgment. The best judges of his own time, we must remember, viewed his intellectual powers with very great respect. Edward Fitzgerald, a crabbed and not easily satisfied critic of men, wrote, "I will say no more of Tennyson than that the more I have seen of him, the more cause I have to think him great. . . . I felt what Charles Lamb describes, a sense of depression at times from the overshadowing of a so much more lofty intellect than my own: this (though it may seem vain to say so) I never experienced before, though I have often been with much greater intellects: but I could not be mistaken in the universality of his mind." The group of brilliant Cambridge men among whom he grew to manhood always regarded him as the chief among them for powers of mind as well as of imagination. The philosopher Sidgwick paid tribute to *In Memoriam,* and Jowett, Master of Balliol, said, "Your poetry has an element of philosophy more to be considered than any regular philosophy in England." Robert Browning, though of so different a temper (and, I may add, so utterly impatient of anything savoring of hypocrisy or sophistication), wrote in a memorable letter on Tennyson's eightieth birthday: "Let me say I associate myself with the uni-

versal pride of our country in your glory, . . . secure that your poetry will be a wonder and delight to all those appointed to come after." Unless we have developed in an unheard-of degree in a single generation, it is absurd, in view of evidence like this, to speak of Tennyson as a pretty melodist but negligible for the content of his thought.

Why, then, is it that to many of us his thought seems tame and thin? Partly, as we have seen, because of the tendency of our time to overvalue novelty, paradox, complexity, as compared with simple and familiar ideas. Hence Browning seems to us far richer and more rewarding in the texture of his substance. So he is, in a sense; his mind was agile, comprehensive, swiftly and intricately constructive, as Tennyson's never was. But if we carefully examine the products of the two men's thinking—the residuum when all that is brilliant and paradoxical has evaporated—the difference is by no means so unfavorable to Tennyson as most of us (the present writer included) have been tempted to assume. It is quite true that Browning's poetry gives us novelty of product as well as novelty of process, and I, for one, count that product inexpressibly precious. Tennyson gives us no really new product. We have seen that his power was in reinterpreting old possessions in the light of new knowledge. We have also seen that, because he commonly followed the *via media,* avoiding the extremes of any question which he discussed,—admitting the worth of both social conservatism and progress, admitting the

truth of the new science and the old faith,—he represents the "Victorian compromise," instead of lifting a flashing sword in behalf of the vanguard of any cause. All this is true, by the way, of Shakespeare; but Shakespeare was so creative in the field of character that we forget that he was not highly creative in the field of thought, while Tennyson was not highly creative in either. He gives us no such great original doctrine as Wordsworth's transcendental doctrine of Nature, Shelley's transcendental doctrine of Liberty, or Browning's transcendental doctrine of Love. On the other hand it is quite likely that what he tells us of nature, liberty, and love is closer to the truth than what these others gave; for truth is usually nearer the *via media,* after all, than the outskirts where the skirmishing minds love to play.

It is probable, then, that Tennyson's permanent place will be with poets like Milton, Pope, and Keats, who—different as they are in many respects—are alike in being distinguished as artists rather than thinkers, and in communicating ideas which they have derived from contemporary movements rather than struck out for themselves. But he is far nearer to Milton than to Pope and Keats, in respect to the fact that his thought, if not highly original, has passed through the imaginative processes of a truly powerful mind. As to his lyric art, which I am not considering here, at its best it need fear comparison with no other poet whatsoever. He can not be to any other generation precisely what he was to

his own; on the other hand we have seen that his comparative strangeness to our literary thought is due to certain special tendencies which we may assume to be temporary. These tendencies—our suspicion of traditional form, of simple-mindedness or high seriousness, of the use of poetry for the presentation of moral ideas, and of the ideals of social ethics characteristic of the English race—I have shown to be such that, in putting us out of touch with Tennyson, they put us out of touch with far too much that is precious in our past. Speaking, therefore, not as a Tennysonian, but as one whose business is the study of the history of literature, I say deliberately that it is to be expected that some of the very things which at this moment obscure the worth of Tennyson's poetry are those which go far to insure it a place in the regard of the future.

THE END

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